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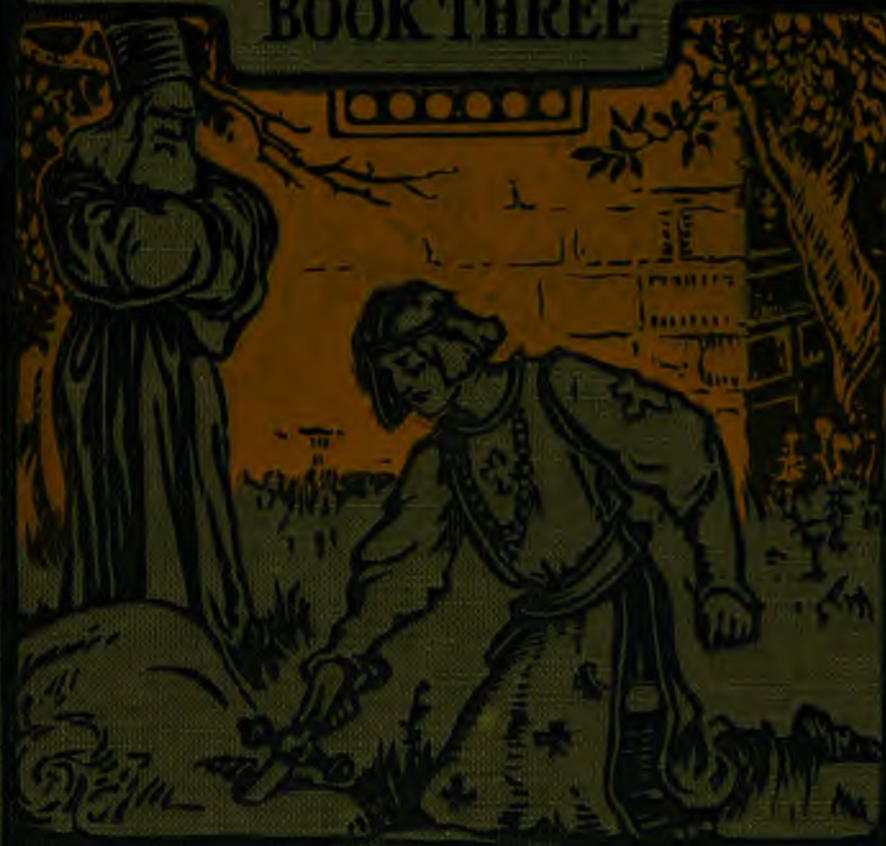
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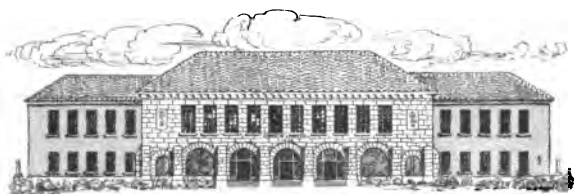
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THE PROGRESSIVE ROAD TO READING

BOOK THREE



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THE PROGRESSIVE ROAD TO READING

Book Three

BY

GEORGINE BURCHILL

TEACHER, NEW YORK CITY

WILLIAM L. ETTINGER

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, NEW YORK CITY

EDGAR DUBS SHIMER

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, NEW YORK CITY



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY

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**THE PROGRESSIVE
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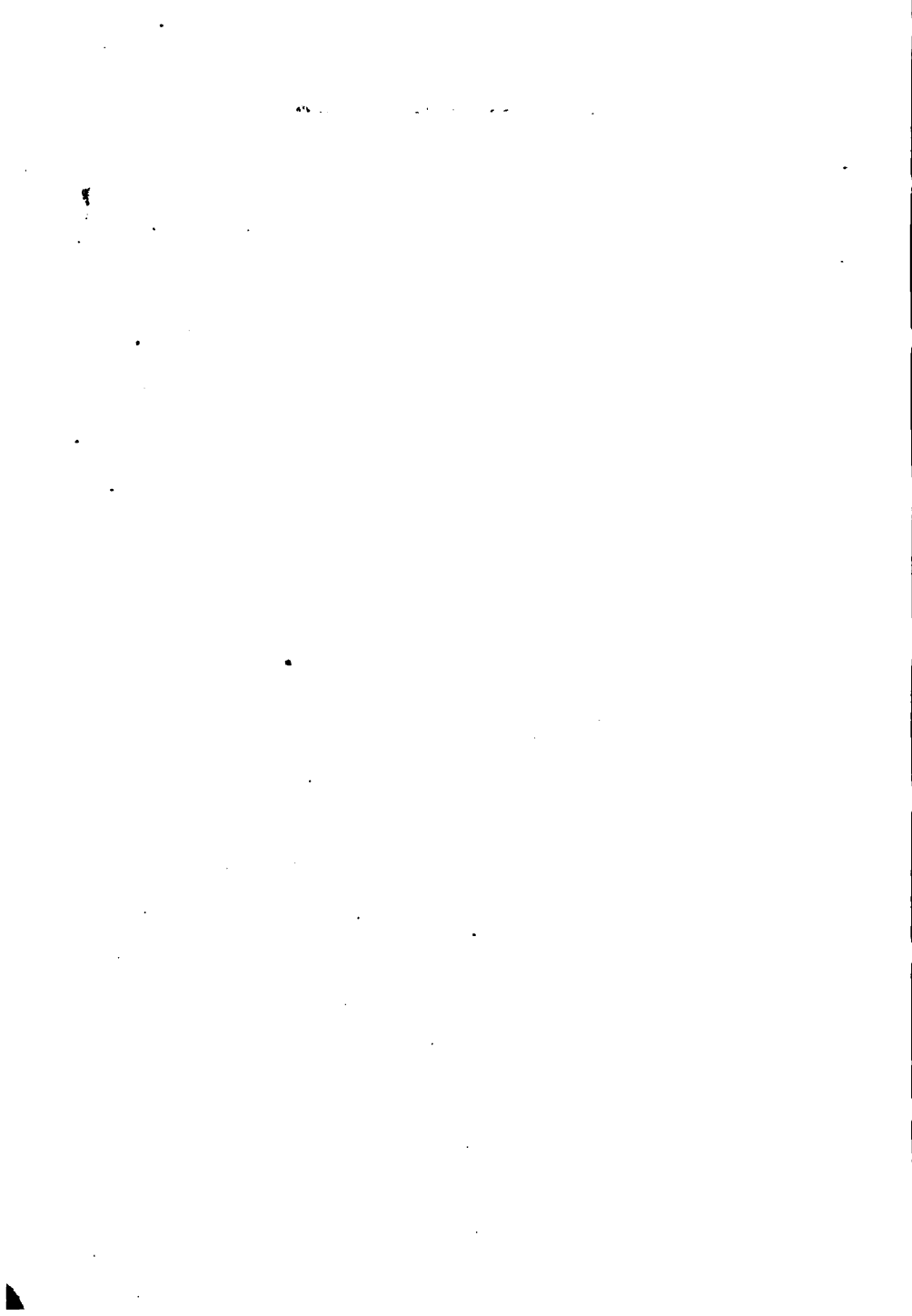
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INTRODUCTION

THIS series is the outgrowth of regular class room work in Public School No. 147, Manhattan, New York City. Its purpose is to inspire the child with a desire to read, by opening up to him the story-world, and through his love of reading, to give him the power to read.

In order that the pupil may be animated by the most effective of all stimuli, interest, the authors have based their method on a collection of legends and folk tales. Selected from the classics of childhood, these stories have real literary value; they sparkle with life and action, and the illustrations effectively help to bring the child into the atmosphere of the story.

The Third Book is a fitting continuation of the series. From the little fables, which carry over the tone of the Second Book, to the stories of the gods of Asgard and of Rome, the child has glimpses into the fairylands of many times and of many countries. And while he half unconsciously masters the phonetics involved in the English language, he is gaining a real delight in literature.



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BOOK THREE



KIND AND CLUTCH

Once upon a time there lived in a country far away two brothers, who kept sheep on a great plain. On one side of this plain there was a forest, and on the other side there were high hills.

No one lived on the plain but shepherds, who dwelt in little cottages, and watched their sheep so carefully that not a lamb was ever lost.

But the most careful of all the shepherds were the two brothers, Clutch and Kind. Now Clutch was very stingy, and never gave anything away; while Kind would have given his last crust to a hungry beggar.

After the father of these two brothers died, Clutch kept all the sheep for himself. He told Kind that he might have the place of a servant if he wished.

Kind did not like to leave his old home, so he helped Clutch to take care of the sheep, and the brothers lived very happily together in their little cottage.

On this plain there was no city nor market place where the people might buy and sell; but the shepherds cared little for that. The wool of the sheep made their clothes, the milk gave them butter and cheese, the fields gave them wheat for bread, and the forest gave lumber for their cottages and wood for the fire.



Every summer at shearing time traders came from a far-off city, and bought the wool from the shepherds.

One summer the traders said that the wool of Clutch's sheep was the best they had found on the plain, and gave him much gold for it. This made Clutch more stingy than he had been before, and when the next shearing time came, he clipped the sheep so close that they were almost bare.

Kind tried to keep his brother from shearing



the flock so close and so often, but Clutch only told him to stop talking, and went on clipping the sheep and putting the money away in his strong box.

Things went on in this way until one autumn when a strange thing happened to the flock. The wool had grown well that summer. Clutch had sheared the sheep twice, and was thinking of a third shearing, when the sheep and the lambs began to stray away. The brothers looked for them over hill and dale, but they were not to be found.

Clutch said that Kind was careless ; and Kind,

though he knew that it was not his fault, watched the flock more carefully than before.

Still the sheep continued to wander away, and the flock grew smaller and smaller. No one could tell why. All that the brothers could find out was that the closest clipped were the first to go.

Storms and cold weather did not stop the straying, and when spring came only three old sheep were left.

Kind and Clutch were watching these sheep one day when Clutch said, "Brother, the wool is thick on their backs."

"Do not shear them now," said Kind. "The east wind still blows. They will be cold." But Clutch went off to the cottage for his bag and his shears.

Kind sadly watched his brother as he walked away, and then turned to call the sheep. But not a sheep was to be seen. He looked all



around, and as he looked, there on the mountain he saw three sheep scampering along a high ridge as fleet as deer.

When Clutch came back he scolded Kind for not having watched the sheep more carefully. "What shall we do?" he asked. "There is no work to be done here on the plain, and I won't stay to be laughed at and be called poor. My father often told me that there were great shepherds living on the other side of the hills.

Let us go and see if they will take us as sheep boys."

So the next day they went away with bag and shears to try their luck.

Said Kind, "We will go the same way the three old sheep went, and perhaps we may find them." But the ground was so rough and steep that after much hard climbing they would gladly have turned back, if they had not feared that the other shepherds would laugh at them.

By noon they had come to the mountain top over which the three sheep had fled. They looked about them. The sheep were not to be seen anywhere, and as the shepherds were very tired they sat down to rest.

As they rested there came a sound of music across the hills, as if a thousand shepherds were playing on their pipes. Kind and Clutch had never heard such music before. They rose and followed it till they came to a wide pasture.



Flowers grew thick on it, and thousands of snow-white sheep were feeding there.

An old man sat among the sheep playing on his pipe. He wore a long coat, green as the holly leaves; his hair hung to his waist, and his beard almost to his knees.

Clutch was afraid of the old shepherd, so Kind spoke for both. "Good Father," said he, "tell us what land this is, and where we may find service. We are shepherds, and we can take good care of sheep."

“These are the hill pastures,” said the old shepherd. “I want some one to shear my flock. Which of you can shear better?”

Clutch came forward. “Good Shepherd,” said he, “I can shear better.”

“Then you shall shear my flock,” said the old man. “When the moon rises I will call the flock; till then rest and eat.” And he gave them some cakes and cheese.

When the sun had gone down and the moon rose, all the snow white sheep lay down on the grass behind the old shepherd. Then the shepherd took his pipe and played a merry tune. At once





there arose a great howling. Nearer and nearer it came, and soon up the hill rushed a troop of fierce looking wolves covered with long, shaggy hair.

Clutch was afraid and would have fled, but the old man said to him, "This is the flock. Rise and shear."

Clutch had never shorn wolves before, but he took his shears and went forward. The first of



the wolves showed his teeth, and the rest howled, so that Clutch was glad to throw down his shears and run away.

“Good Shepherd,” he cried, “I will shear sheep, not wolves.”

“They must be shorn,” said the old man

angrily, "or you shall go back to the plains and they after you. But perhaps your brother can shear them."

Now Kind, too, was afraid of the wolves, but he took up the shears which Clutch had thrown away in his fright, and went boldly up to the nearest wolf.

To his great surprise the wolf seemed to know him, and stood still to be shorn. Kind clipped the wolf as he had wished his brother to clip the sheep, neatly, but not too close. When he had clipped one, another came forward, and Kind went on shearing by the bright moonlight till all the wolves were shorn.

Then the old man said, "Well done! Take the wool and the flock for your wages. Go back to the plains, and if you need him, take this stingy brother of yours with you to help you keep the sheep."

Kind did not want a flock of wolves, but before

he could answer they changed into the very sheep that had strayed away. They had grown fatter, and their wool seemed to be very soft and fine.

When the dawn came, the old man sent the shepherds away with the flock. "For," said he, "this is fairyland, and no man may see the sunrise on these hills but myself."

Clutch and Kind went home thankfully, you may be sure. And there they live to this day, keeping their flocks on the plain; but only Kind may shear the sheep, for they are afraid of Clutch.



THE LOST FIDDLE

St. Malo was a quiet little town near the sea. The people who lived there were poor, for there was very little grass for the cattle, and no amount of care would make the corn grow well.

But if the people had no grass in their fields, they had plenty of stone. Stretching far away



over the plain were two long lines of granite blocks which led to fairyland, so the people said.

Near the great wide plain lived a boy named Bernard. Bernard could play the fiddle; not as you or I would play it, but as if the fairies themselves were touching the strings.

One day when Bernard had gone to the fair, a beggar came by the little cottage. He chanced to see the fiddle hanging on the wall, and stole it, thinking he would sell it in the next town.

When Bernard returned there was no fiddle. He searched the cottage for it, but it was not to be found.

As the months went by Bernard missed his fiddle more and more. He worked hard all that winter to buy another, but something always happened to use up the money which he had saved. Once his mother fell sick, and the little hoard vanished ; then again the roof needed mending, and when that work was paid for, the fiddle seemed farther away than ever.

New Year's Eve came, bringing with it a storm so wild that no one remembered its like. Bernard listened in dismay to the wind that shook the windows and threatened to carry off the cottage roof. He knew that the stable where the Donkey and the Cow lay was old and shaky, and he feared that harm would come to them.

At midnight he decided to brave the storm and see for himself whether the animals were safe.



Drenched with rain and buffeted by the wind, he reached the stable, and found that it had withstood the storm. He gave the animals some fresh hay, and was just about to leave them when he heard a voice say, "Well, my Master, you are very good to come and see whether we are safe."

Bernard stood still in surprise, for it was the old Donkey who had spoken. Then he remembered having heard that every New Year's Eve at midnight, animals are given the power of speech.

The Cow turned toward him and asked, "Have you found your fiddle yet, my Master?"

"No," returned Bernard, "I have not found it, nor have I earned money to buy another."

"Is money all you need?" asked the Donkey. "I can help you to that."

"You?" asked Bernard in surprise.

"Yes, I," replied the Donkey. "Have you forgotten that every hundred years the great stones out on the plain yonder leave their places, and go to the river to take a drink?"

"I remember that my grandfather once told me something of the kind," answered Bernard. "But I thought that it was a fairy tale."

"No, indeed! It is no fairy tale," exclaimed the Cow. "And besides, these stones hide great treasures, my Master. Long ago when they were first placed there, the fairies buried under them all the treasures of fairyland — gold, silver, and jewels. The treasure is still there, and if you go

to the plain next Thursday at midnight, you may be able to get enough gold to buy another fiddle. But be careful to take with you a five-leafed clover, for without that in your hand the stones would crush you, in their hurry to get into their places again. Good luck to you, Master. You have been very kind to us. We wish you well."

The Cow and the Donkey ceased speaking, and lay down on the straw and went to sleep, as do all four-footed animals.

At daybreak on the following morning Bernard was in the fields searching for the five-leafed clover. His search lasted many hours, and he wandered far inland where the grass is always green. But on Thursday morning he returned to the village, carrying in the breast of his blouse the precious five-leafed clover.

An hour before midnight he was on the plain with a bag in his hand. By the light of the stars he could see the stones, big and ugly and gray,

standing motionless in their places. Bernard made sure that the clover was safe in the breast of his blouse, and then sat down to wait for midnight.

At last the hour struck, and at the same moment there was a movement on the plain; the great stones left their places, and rushed headlong down to the river, jostling one against the other, and tearing up the ground till they were lost in the shadows.

Bernard went quickly to the plain. There where the stones had stood were deep pits filled with gold and jewels. He gave a cry of delight.



“Here is enough gold and to spare. I shall have my fiddle at last.”

He knelt and filled his hands with gold pieces. As he rose to his feet he heard in the distance a roaring sound; the stones had finished drinking, and were returning to their places.

They tore along, crushing everything that lay in their path. Bernard tried to step out of their way, but there were so many of them that to get out of the path of one meant to be crushed by the next.

All at once he remembered the five-leafed clover which the sight of the gold had made him forget. He plucked it from the breast of his blouse, and held it high over his head.

The great blocks of stone were leaping to their places as Bernard held up the magic leaves. They shivered, stopped, and turning out of their path, passed homeward on each side of him, settling into their places with a roar that shook the earth.

Bernard picked up his gold and hurried home.



The next day he went to town and bought a fiddle which proved to be the most wonderful fiddle in the world. People said it was a fairy fiddle, for everybody who heard it danced and sang. Even the Cow and the Donkey frisked in their stalls when the wind carried the music to their rickety old stable.

So Bernard lived happily ever after with his fiddle; and good luck followed him all his life.

THE FAIRIES

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain lake,
With frogs for their watchdogs,
All night awake.

High on the hilltop
The old king sits;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.

With a bridge of white mist
Columbkil he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses ;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights,
To sup with the queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

By the craggy hillside,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn trees
For pleasure here and there:
Is any man so daring
As dig one up in spite,



He shall find the thornies set
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

— WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.



HOW THE CARPENTER LOST HIS HUMP

Once there was a carpenter who was a hunchback. He was going home through the woods one beautiful evening, but he did not see the sunset nor hear the singing of the birds. He was too tired and hungry. He said to himself, "I will sit here under this old tree and rest awhile."



He threw his bag of tools on the ground, and stretched himself beside it. Just as he did this, two fairies came through the woods toward him, and beckoned to him.

The carpenter was frightened, and jumping up, started to run away. But the fairies called to him. "Do not run away," they said. "We will not hurt you."

They ran up to him and taking hold of his hands said, "The queen of the fairies has sent us to you. She wants to ask you a question. When you have answered it, she will let you go home again."

"Perhaps I cannot answer it," replied the carpenter.

"Yes, yes! You will be able to tell her," said the fairies eagerly. "Come! The queen is waiting."

With a wand that she carried, one of the fairies touched the carpenter's rough old shoes, and on each side of them appeared wings. Then they took his hands once more, and away the three went over hill and dale, till at last they stopped before a big rough stone that stood in the middle of a pasture.

The fairy who carried the wand tapped on this stone three times. A door opened in the rock, and the carpenter found himself in a great cave.



The cave was blazing with light, and sparkling with bright and shining jewels.

As the carpenter stepped into the light, a fairy clad all in blue handed him a gold cup filled to the brim with a sparkling liquid. "Drink," she said.

The carpenter drank, and all weariness left him. He felt young and gay and strong. He looked about him. At the further end of the cave sat the queen on her throne. Three merry fiddlers made gay music, and the floor was covered with whirling fairies.

As the carpenter stood there looking at the dancing and longing to join in it, a troop of fairies gathered round him, crying, "Come and dance! Come and dance!" They seized him, dragged him into the circle, and from that moment the carpenter was the merriest of the merry company.

By and by a fairy drew the carpenter away from his companions, saying, "The queen wishes to speak with you." He followed her to the throne, and bowed low before the fairy queen.

She looked at him and smiled. "You are not a fairy," she said, "and you may be able to tell us what we want to know. We have forgotten some of the words of one of our songs. We like the song, but it is spoiled for us, since we do not know all the words. Listen while my people sing, and you will understand."

At a sign from the queen, the fiddlers played a gay tune and all the fairies sang, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday."



THE FIDDLERS PLAYED A GAY TUNE

Here the music and the singing ended in a great wail, for the fairies had forgotten the name of the next day.

"O Carpenter!" they cried. "What is the next day? We have forgotten."

"Why, it is Sunday," answered the carpenter. "Don't you remember?"

"Sunday! Sunday!" cried the fairies. "Sunday! Sunday!"

The fiddlers struck up the tune once more, and the fairies sang, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday," delighted to think that they had once more found the lost day.

When the first streaks of day stole through the crevices in the rocks, the fairies stopped dancing, as it was time for them to go to sleep. The carpenter began to think of his home.

"You have helped us," said the queen of the fairies. "Tell me what you wish for most."

“To get rid of my hump,” answered the carpenter.

The queen clapped her hands, and at once there appeared a troop of fairies carrying a great gold wand, at the top of which was a crystal ball. They bowed before her, and presented the wand.

The queen took it, and with it gently struck the hump on the carpenter’s back. Again and again she touched the hump, and with each stroke it grew smaller, till at last it was gone.

Then the fairies shouted and clapped their hands. They loaded him with jewels, and gave



him a fine crimson cloak. Just as the sun looked down on the great rock in the pasture they led him to the door, and said, "Do you see that robin sitting on the bush? Follow him. He will guide you home."

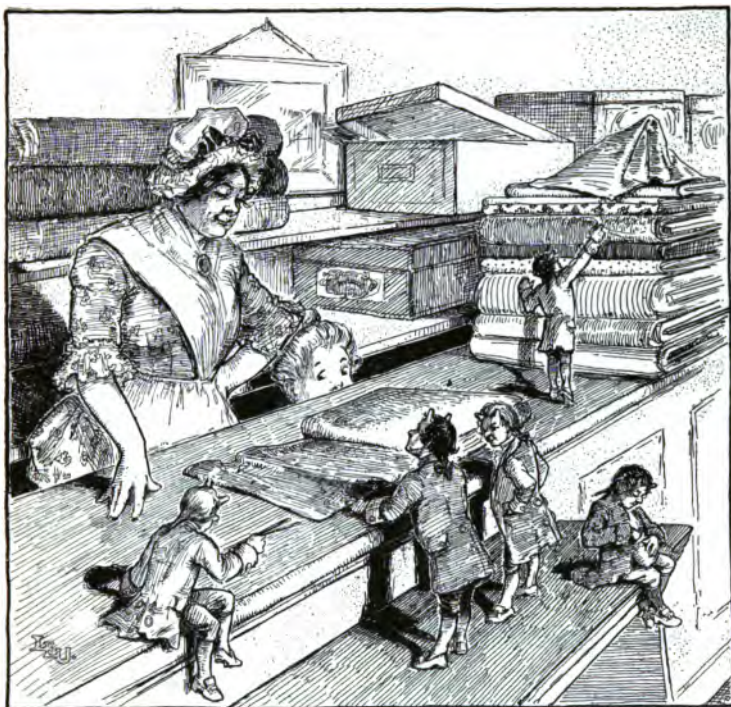
The door closed, and the carpenter found himself with a crimson cloak on his arm, his hands full of jewels, and no hump on his back.

For many years afterward all the hunchbacked people in that country wandered over the fields and the hills, hoping to meet a fairy who would charm the hump away.



THE FAIRIES' GOLD

In a certain forest in a country far away there lives a race of men who are only a foot high. They are always dressed in red, and wear on their heads two horns. Because of this they are called the Little Horned Men.



They are gentle little creatures who have never been known to harm any one. Long ago, when our greatgrandfathers were young, the Little Horned Men went around the country in the day-time, and often visited the shops to buy needles and thread and red cloth for their coats.

The country people tell many stories of the kindly doings of the little people of the forest; of lost children brought home to their parents, or of a piece of gold dropped at the door of a starving family. But that was in the good old days before the fairies had been frightened away by bad boys and cackling geese.

Now they never come out of their caves in the daytime, but if the country people go to the fairy rocks at midnight, and are very careful to make no noise, they may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the tiny men in red coats.

Once there lived on the edge of the forest a poor blacksmith. He had a great many children. There were big boys and big girls, little boys and little girls, and middling-sized boys and middling-sized girls. These children were often hungry, for their father could not earn enough money to buy bread for them to eat.

One day his wife came to him and said, "Jean,

there is no flour in the house, and there is no money to buy bread. What shall we do?"

"Alas!" said Jean. "My poor children must not starve. There are plenty of rabbits in the forest. I will catch some this very night."

At sunset he took his gun, and went away to the forest to get food for his hungry children. It was a lovely night, but Jean did not think about that; he was looking for the rabbits. At last he came to the fairy rocks. He stepped into a deep shadow and stood very still, thinking that the rabbits would come out of their holes if he made no noise. Suddenly he heard some one say, "Hurry! Hurry! We have only to-night to work!"

Some one else said, "We are hurrying, Master."

A rumbling noise came near, and then there passed in the bright moonlight a troop of little men pulling a cart. An overseer followed them cracking a whip and calling out, "Make haste! Make haste! We have only to-night to work."



“Who can they be?” thought Jean. Then he remembered having heard his grandfather say that on a certain night in summer the Little Horned Men always turn over their store of gold to keep it from molding. “The Little Horned Men,” said Jean to himself. “I will watch them.”

When the fairies had passed, the overseer turned and saw the blacksmith standing in the shadow, and said, "Blacksmith, do you want to earn some money?"

"Yes, indeed!" replied the blacksmith.

"You are big and strong," said the fairy. "Go and help my men."

"What shall I do?" asked Jean.

The overseer led him into a cave where the gold lay in bags. There were big bags and little bags. Some of them had burst open, and the yellow gold lay all over the floor.

"My servants are careless," said the overseer. "This gold has not been moved for a year. Help them to carry it into the moonlight. I will give you a gold piece for your trouble."

The overseer cracked his whip, and Jean picked up two of the bags, and followed the stream of little men. All night long he worked, till his back and legs ached.



As he was carrying the last of the bags to the cave, the first streak of light appeared in the east.

“Day has come! Day has come!” shouted the little men. As if by magic they disappeared into the ground. The overseer cracked his whip at Jean and cried, “Be quick! Be quick!”

Jean dropped the two bags of gold just inside the opening of the cave, and turned to ask the overseer for his gold piece. What was his surprise

to see no overseer. He looked about him, but there was no cave and not one Little Horned Man. Night was gone, and the fairies had vanished with it.

Jean called, but only the echo answered. "Alas!" he exclaimed. "I have worked all night, and the faithless overseer has not paid me. My poor children will have to go hungry for another day."

He walked home through the forest, thinking sadly of the empty flour barrel at home, when all at once he came upon a heap of gold pieces lying in the path.



At first he did not believe his eyes. He fell on his knees, and turned over the pile of gold. He clinked one piece against another. Yes, it was real.

He was overcome with joy. He filled his pockets with the pieces, and there being some left, he buried these in the ground and ran home.

He burst into the house where his wife and children were still sleeping. "See! See!" he shouted. "Here is gold to spare."

They gathered around him while he told his wonderful tale.

The next day Jean went to the forest and got the buried gold. Then he borrowed a cart from a neighbor and took his wife and children to the town. There they bought not only things to eat, but some clothes and a few toys.

When night came, they returned home happy and contented. The wages that Jean had earned that midsummer night kept them in comfort for a long time.

THE LOST CHARM

Once upon a time there was an old man who was very poor. He was so poor that often he did not have enough to eat. Then he would go down to the river, and catch a fish.

One stormy day while he was fishing for his supper a fairy came, and asked him to carry her across the river. She seemed to be a child in great distress. The old man dropped his line and carried her across.

The fairy did not say a word all the time the old man was carrying her, but when he put her down on the other side, she said, "I have no money to give you, but take this; drop it into your wine jug, and as long as it remains there you will never want for a drink." She put in his hand a tiny bit of amber, and vanished.

When the old man had reached his little house, he dropped the charm into the empty wine jug.

Sure enough, there was wine in it. He poured a little into a glass and tasted it. It was very good. "My fortune is made," said the old man. "I will set up an inn."

The next day he turned his house into an inn; got a Dog to keep the thieves away, and a Cat to keep the mice away, and settled down.

All went well till in a moment of carelessness he poured the charm into a customer's jug.

Then the old man's supply of wine gave out, and the news soon spread. Each man on hearing this went to see if it were true, and the little inn was soon filled with anxious inquirers.



"It is true," said the old man, but not one word more would he say. So the crowd went home.

Now the Cat and the Dog, who knew all about the enchanted jug, waited till the old man had gone to bed, and then sat down by the fire to talk the matter over.

"I am sure," said the Cat, "that I can find the charm, if I come within smelling distance of it. But where shall we look for it?"

This was a puzzle. The Dog proposed that they search every house. "We will begin tomorrow," said he. "You call on the Cats indoors, while I chat with the Dogs outside, and if you smell anything, you can tell me."

The plan pleased the Cat, and that very night they started out. Every night they searched one or two houses, and in time they had visited all on this side of the river, but with no success.

"We will go across the river," said the Dog, "but we must wait till it freezes over."

As it soon grew cold, the river froze solid. The Cat and the Dog crossed over and continued their search on the other side. Each morning they returned to their poor old master, who grew more and more sad.

One night when it was very near spring, as the Cat was running over the roof of a house, he smelled something that caused him to stop. "It is the charm," said he to himself.

He carefully followed the smell to the floor below, and found that it came from a strong box on the top of a chest of drawers. The box was locked, so the Cat went out to ask the Dog what could be done.

"I can't climb up there," said the Dog, "and you can't bring the box down, neither can we break it. But there is one thing we can do. Go to the king of the rats, and tell him that if he will gnaw a hole in this box, you and I will agree to let rats and mice alone for ten years."



“ Good! ” said the Cat, and away he went to the place where the rat king lived.

• At first the king would not listen to anything he had to say. But when he found that the Cat had come for help and meant him no harm, he came to the door of his house.

The Cat told his story.

“I will do it,” said the king. “The best gnawers in my kingdom shall begin work this very night.”

The Cat thanked him, and went away to tell the Dog.

By this time the ice in the river had melted, and as it was not possible for the Cat or the Dog to return to their master, they spent some months in waiting for the rats to gnaw a hole in the box.

One night when it was almost summer, the Cat saw a big fat Rat coming toward him. It was the chief of the gnawers.

“Good evening,” said the Rat. “We have at last gnawed the hole through, but it is so small on the inside, that we do not know how to get the charm out, unless you may be able to reach it with your paw.”

The Cat called the Dog, and they both hurried off to see for themselves. They found the hole very small, so small that the Cat could not put



his paw in, and besides, the charm was at the other end of the box.

“Call a Mouse,” said the Dog, “and let him bring out the charm.”

So the Rat called a Mouse, and the little fellow with much pushing and pulling at last got the charm out of the box.

The Dog and the Cat started at once to restore

the charm to their master. But how should they get across the river?

“You must hold the charm in your teeth,” said the Dog to the Cat. “Then climb on my back, and I will swim across the river.”

All went well, until as they neared the other side of the river, some children chanced to see them coming.

They laughed and danced at the sight of a cat sitting on a dog's back. This amused the Cat so much that he laughed, too, and in doing so lost the charm.

The Dog, seeing this, dived for the charm, and the Cat was dragged under the water. The poor Cat, half choked with the water, stuck his claws into the Dog's skin. This hurt the Dog so much that he could not find the charm, and had to swim ashore without it.

“What a foolish Cat you are!” said the Dog. “We have worked for six months to find this

charm, and because you laughed, the work is wasted." Then he sprang at the Cat.

Dripping and half frozen, the Cat climbed a tree just in time to escape the Dog's teeth. There he sat, while the sun dried his fur, spitting and snarling at the Dog.

Night came, the Dog went away, and the Cat came down from the tree.

But ever since then the sight of a dog will cause a cat to spit and snarl. As for the dog, he can never forgive the silly cat that lost the charm.

And the fairy says that cats and dogs will never be friends until the charm is found again.



THE OWL AND THE PUSSY CAT

The Owl and the Pussy Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat;
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the moon above,
And sang to a small guitar,
“O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are, —
You are,
What a beautiful Pussy you are!”

Pussy said to the Owl, “You elegant fowl!
How wonderful sweet you sing!
Oh let us be married, — too long we have tarried, —
But what shall we do for a ring?”
They sailed away for a year and a day
To the land where the bong tree grows,
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring in the end of his nose, —
His nose,
With a ring in the end of his nose.



“Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?” Said the Piggy, “I will.”
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined upon mince and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon,
And hand in hand on the edge of the sand
They danced by the light of the moon, —
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.



THE ARCHER AND THE TRUMPETER

Once upon a time two men went on a journey together. One was an archer, and he carried his bow and arrows. The other was a king's trumpeter; he carried only his trumpet.

They traveled along until they came to a wild place where there were no houses and no people. "Trumpeter," said the archer to his companion, "you have nothing with which to defend yourself. What would you do if a lion or a tiger should jump out of the bushes at you?"

"I do not know," replied the trumpeter. "I have never been taught to use a bow and arrows. I can only make music for the king and for his soldiers."

"Music will never keep you from harm," said the archer scornfully. "Only weapons like these will do that. Look, my friend." As he spoke, he fitted an arrow to his bow and shot at a bird



that was flying across the sky. It fell to the ground dead.

“When you are with me you need not fear,” said he. “I will take care of you. If we should happen to meet robbers, I will treat them as I have treated that bird. You ought to be thankful that you are traveling with a soldier, for you could never take care of yourself.”

“No,” said the trumpeter, “I have nothing with which to defend myself.”

They walked on.

When they were in the middle of the forest, a band of robbers sprang out of the bushes. There were twenty in the band, and each one had a sword.

The archer shot at them and killed one, but the others soon overcame him. They dragged him to their camp, and set a guard to watch him.

The trumpeter thought that they would make a prisoner of him, too; but the robbers said, "He has no bow. We will let him alone." So they took his money, but let him keep his trumpet.

Night came on, and the robbers made a fire. Having cooked a great supper, they lay on the ground, eating and resting and singing songs.

As they were finishing their meal, the trumpeter approached the captain of the robbers. "Shall I play you a tune?" he asked.

"Yes! Yes!" the captain replied.

The trumpeter played for them. He played so



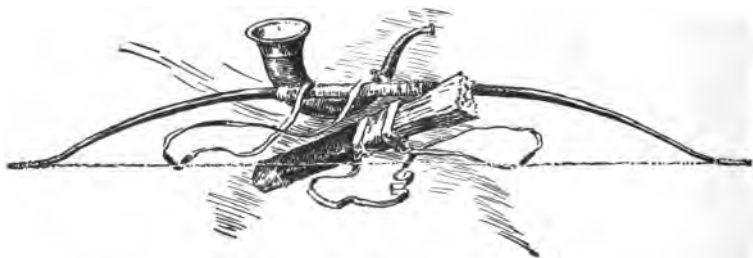
"SHALL I PLAY YOU A TUNE?"

loud that the soldiers in the king's castle on the other side of the forest heard the music.

The soldiers knew the tune. They had often heard the trumpeter play it. "That is the trumpeter," they said. "He must be in trouble. Let us go to him."

They quickly mounted their horses. Guided by the sound of the music, they soon found the band of robbers. The soldiers seized the robbers and carried them off to prison.

The poor archer was very glad to be free once more. "I have learned something to-day," said he. "I have learned that a bow is not always better than a trumpet."





THE CHAINING OF THE WOLF

Long, long ago, as an old story tells us, there lived in Asgard a race of gods. Odin was wise. Thor was strong. Loki was mischievous. Tyr was bold.

These gods were always at war with the giants, their neighbors. One day they captured a giant Wolf. He was so fierce that Tyr was the only one brave enough to give him food. Odin thought it would be well to keep the Wolf in Asgard under his own eye.

As the Wolf grew older, he became larger, stronger, and fiercer, till at length the gods feared that he would bring destruction on Asgard if he were allowed to remain free any longer. So they decided to chain him.

The Wolf grinned when he heard this, for he knew that no one was so strong as he, and he thought that no rope nor chain could hold him.

The gods went to their anvils. For many days the hammers clanged and clashed, and at last a chain was forged.

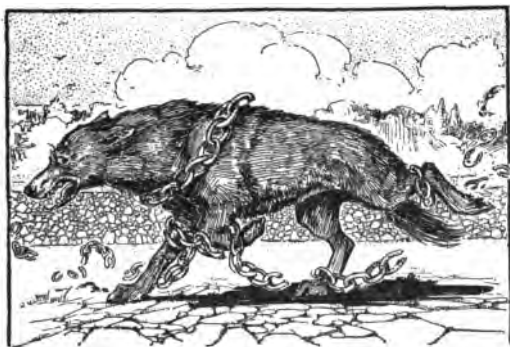
No one had ever seen such a chain before. It was a mile long, and the links were very thick and strong. But the Wolf laughed when he saw it.

He let them bind him, but no sooner did he stretch himself than the great chain flew into a hundred pieces, and he was free. "You should have made it stronger," said he as he walked away.

Once more the gods turned to their anvils. After many days of work, they had made another chain. It was longer than the first and much stronger. All the gods came to look at it.

"It is very strong," they said. "The Wolf will not be able to break this." But when the Wolf saw the chain, he smiled, for he knew that they could not make a chain strong enough to hold him.

"You may bind me," he said lazily, and he lay still while they bound him with the chain. With one shake of his great shoulders, one kick of his strong legs, he sent the links flying far and wide.



When the gods saw this, they were very much afraid. "No chain of our making will hold him," they said. "We will ask the dwarfs to make a magic chain."

So they sent a messenger to the dwarfs. "Make us a chain," he said, "strong enough to hold the Wolf, but let it be slender and thin, so that he will not be afraid of it."

Now the dwarfs were wonderfully clever, so they could easily make a magic chain. They set to work with their little hammers and soon had it finished.

It was fine and soft, but as strong as iron. For it was made of the sound of the sea and the songs of the birds and the cat's footsteps — things that have magic in them, and that only the cunning dwarfs know how to weave into a chain.

Two of the dwarfs took the magic chain to Asgard. The gods were delighted with it, and each one put forth all his strength to break it.



But not even Thor the Mighty could wrench the links apart.

“This will hold him,” said the gods. “But we must be careful, or he will suspect that there is magic in it.”

“O Wolf!” they cried. “Here is a new chain. Try your strength upon it.”

The Wolf looked scornfully at the slender cord. “Who couldn’t break a thing like that?” he

•
said. "But why do you bring me such a tiny chain? Is there magic in it?"

"You are afraid," laughed the gods.

"I do not trust that chain," said the Wolf. "But I am not a coward, so if one of you will put his hand in my mouth and keep it there while the others bind me, I will let you fasten the chain."

The gods looked at each other in dismay, but at last bold Tyr, the bravest of them all, stepped forward and placed his hand in the Wolf's mouth, knowing full well that he would lose it.

Then they began to fasten the chain around the Wolf's feet. Around and around they drew it. When their work was done, they stood aside to see what would happen.

The Wolf tried to break this chain as he had broken the others, but the more he struggled the tighter it became.

Soon he saw that he had been deceived. Then



he kicked and howled in his rage. The sky trembled and the earth shook, but the chain did not break.

“At last!” cried the gods. “At last he is bound, and Asgard is safe.”

Then the gods fastened one end of the chain to a big rock which they sank far down in the earth. There in the heart of the world the Wolf lay howling and growling, but unable to move. And there he lies still.

LOKI AND THE DWARFS

Loki was the god of fire. He was very mischievous, and he was always playing tricks on the other gods.

One day, as he was walking idly through the city of Asgard, he came to the palace of Thor, the God of Thunder, the strongest of all the gods. On the steps of the palace sat Sif, Thor's wife, fast asleep. Her long hair fell about her and shone like gold in the sunshine.

"I'll cut it off," said Loki to himself, "and she'll never know who did it."



So he stole up softly behind Sif as she sat asleep, and cut off every bit of her hair. Then he ran away, for at any moment Thor might return and find who had done it. Loki knew very well that he could expect no mercy from Thor.

After a while Sif woke up, and finding all her hair gone, cried and cried, and at last hid herself, for she knew that without her hair she looked ugly. In a little while Thor came home, and Sif told him the terrible story — that she had fallen asleep on the steps of the palace, that while she slept some one had cut off her hair and that when she awoke it was gone.

As she talked, Thor grew more and more angry. "I know who did it," he shouted. "It was that rascal Loki. I'll find him and make him put every hair back on your head." And off he rushed to find Loki, who by this time was very much afraid.



It was not long before Thor found Loki trying to hide. He seized him by the throat and choked him almost to death.

“You villain!” he thundered. “Put back the hair on Sif’s head.”

“Let me go!” cried Loki. “I can’t put back Sif’s hair. You know I can’t.”

“Yes, you can,” said Thor. “You must do it somehow. Promise me that you will do it.”

Loki was very much afraid of Thor, so he promised. "I'll find some way to do it," he said, "only stop choking me."

After Loki had sworn faithfully to restore Sif's hair, Thor let him go.

Now Loki was a great friend of the black dwarfs, who lived far under the ground. These dwarfs were cunning jewelers, and they were busy all day long making most wonderful things of gold and silver. So Loki paid them a visit.

"Dwarfs," he said, "make me a crown of golden hair that will grow like any real hair, and I will give you anything you want for your trouble."

"Very well," replied the dwarfs.

To make magic hair that would grow on Sif's head was a very simple matter for such clever workers. Soon the hair was ready, shining and smooth and soft. Besides the hair, the dwarfs had also made for Loki a ship and a golden spear.

The ship was not like any that you have ever seen or ever will see. It was a magic ship that could be taken apart and folded up small enough to go into one's pocket. When it was put together and placed in the water, it grew and grew till it was large enough to hold a great army. And besides, it could sail just as well without wind as with it. That was the best part of the charm.

The golden spear was also made with magic. When thrown, it never missed the mark. A very fine spear it was, and Loki was glad to have it.

He thanked the dwarfs, and began to climb up out of the cave to the sunshine; but just at the gate he met the dwarf Brok, Brok of the Big Head, so called because his head was the largest part of him.

"Hullo, Loki!" said Brok. "What have you there?"



“Three great treasures which the black dwarfs have made for me,” replied Loki proudly.

“Poof,” said Brok. “The black dwarfs can’t do much. You should see what my brother Sind can do.”

Loki showed Brok his precious burden. “There!” said he. “Can your brother Sind do better than that?”

Brok laughed and nodded his big head wisely.

“Give him two days, Loki, and I will bring to the city three treasures greater far than these. The gods shall decide whether or not your black dwarfs can do better than my brother Sind. If you win, you shall cut off my head. If I win, I will cut off yours.”

“Agreed,” said Loki.

When the two days were over, Loki and Brok went to Asgard, each carrying his wonderful gifts.

There they found the gods sitting in the great hall. Odin, Thor, his wife Sif, and all the others were seated on their golden thrones.

Loki bowed low before them. “O gods,” he said, “Brok and I have each brought three gifts, and you are to decide which you like the better. If I lose, this dwarf is to cut off my head.”

Loki first brought out the magic spear which could never miss its mark. This he gave to Odin, who hurled it and said, “Good! Very good, indeed, Brother!”

The golden hair he gave to Thor, who at once placed it on Sif's head, where it began to grow just like any other hair. Sif was delighted with her new hair, and forgave Loki for all the mischief he had done.

Then Loki took out of his pocket the ship, all folded up like a toy boat. He told them that it was a magic ship, and that when placed in the water it would grow and grow till it was large enough to carry many people, and that besides all this it could go without any breeze. This he gave to Frey, and you cannot imagine how pleased Frey was with this gift.



“Well done!” said all the gods, and Loki smiled proudly.

It was now Brok’s turn.

“Surely you cannot show us anything better than Loki’s gifts,” said the gods. “But come, let us see what you have brought.”

Then Brok of the Big Head brought a big bag to the foot of the throne. “You shall soon see,” he said.

First he pulled out a ring of gold which he gave to Odin. “This,” said he, “is a magic ring. Every ninth day there will drop from it nine other rings just like it.”

Odin nodded wisely. “Well done, Dwarf!” he said, and all the other gods clapped their hands.

Once more Brok stooped to the big bag. “I give you,” he said to Frey, “this gold boar. He is a magic boar and can run faster than any horse; besides, his bristles are like stars, and on the darkest night you will need no lantern.”

“That is a fine gift,” said Frey. “I can ride about the world faster on this boar than on my horse. Loki, this is better than your boat.”

Then Brok drew out of the bag the third gift. It was a hammer. “This,” said the dwarf, “is a magic hammer. It will break the strongest iron, and no matter how far or how hard you throw it, it will always come back to you. Besides, you can make it very little to put into your pocket. I give it to Thor.”

The gods were so pleased with the dwarf's gifts that they declared he had won the wager. So Loki was to lose his head.

“Brok,” said Loki, “I will give you anything you wish in exchange for my head.”

But Brok refused.

“Well, then,” said Loki, “catch me if you can.” And away he went like the wind, for Loki had on his magic shoes.



Brök was angry. He stamped about and tore his hair with rage. He turned to Frey, to whom he had given the magic boar. "Catch him," he begged. "I gave you the magic boar. Ride after him and bring him back."

Frey mounted the boar and soon brought Loki back.

“So,” said Brok, “you see I shall have your head after all.”

“You said my head and not my neck,” said Loki. “You may have my head, but not one inch of my neck.”

“That is so,” said the gods.

Brok was puzzled, for how could he cut off Loki’s head without touching his neck? If he touched Loki’s neck, he knew that the gods would punish him severely for it. He thought for a long time.

“After all,” he growled, “I don’t want your head. But I am going to sew up your boasting lips.”

So with a stout needle and a strong thread he sewed up Loki’s lips, and the mischievous god was unable for a long while to set them free. During this time he could carry no tales, and this saved the other gods from much trouble and sorrow.

THE GREAT KETTLE

Once upon a time Æger, the God of the Sea, invited the gods of Asgard to a banquet.

Now Æger lived at the bottom of the sea, a very long way from Asgard. So the gods set out early in the morning, and by traveling rapidly all day reached the palace of the sea god just as the sun went down.

It was a beautiful palace. The windows were made of fishes' scales, the carpets were soft green seaweed, and the chairs and tables were made of pink shells.



The gods sat down to dine. First they had oysters, and then some soup made of a wonderful kale that grows at the very bottom of the ocean. After that they had little crabs, then all kinds of fish, from the tiny herring which never swims alone because it is afraid, to the great pink salmon which is afraid of nothing, and after that many other things that only the sea people know the names of.

They also had a sweet drink, called mead, which was made of water and honey. Æger was famous for his mead. It was cool and delicious, and the guests drank so freely that the supply soon gave out.

"I must make some more mead," said Æger to himself. But when he went to look for a kettle, there was none in all the sea large enough. At first he did not know what to do, but at last he decided to ask his guests to help him, for he knew that they were wise and powerful.

“Thor,” said Æger, “will you get me a kettle?”

“Certainly,” said Thor. “Just tell me where to find it.”

That was not an easy thing to do, for a kettle large enough to hold mead for all the gods was not to be found at a moment's notice. Every one wanted more mead, but nobody had a kettle large enough.

At last Tyr said, “The giant Hymer has a kettle a mile deep. It is at his house. Will you help me fetch it, Thor?”

“Do you think we can get it?” asked Thor.

“Well,” said Tyr, “if he won't give it to us, we will take it.”

So they started off at once and traveled a long, long way, till at last they came to Hymer's house. There they found the giant's wife, who was very beautiful and good.

“Welcome,” said the giantess. “What has brought you to the house of Hymer?”

They told her about the banquet at the bottom of the sea and about their need of the kettle, and she promised to help them.

“But,” said she, “Hymer will soon be home from the hunt, and if I give you the kettle, you will not have time to get away with it. He will follow you and beat you. You had much better wait.”

She gave them some meat and drink, and then looked about for a safe place in which to hide them.

“Ah!” she cried. “The very place! Why not hide in the great kettle? And if Hymer does not find you, you may think of a way to run off with your hiding place.”

She helped them to climb into the great pot, which hung on a beam with seven others not so large.

Soon Hymer came home. He was a terrible giant. The very earth shook as he trod upon it,



SHE HELPED THEM CLIMB INTO THE GREAT POT

and the kettles rattled* against each other as they hung from the beam.

“Wife,” he roared, “you have had visitors!”

His wife trembled. “One of the gods has come to see us,” she said.

“Yes,” grumbled the giant, “and has brought some one with him. I saw two men on the mountain top. They were going so fast that I made up my mind they came from Asgard, because only the gods have magic shoes. Though I put on my eagle dress, I could not catch up with them. Now tell me where you have hidden them.”

“There,” said his wife, “behind that pillar.”

The giant turned his frosty glance upon the pillar, when — crack, crack — the marble pillar broke in two, and down came the beam on which the kettles hung. The kettles smashed into a hundred pieces, all except the big one in which Thor and Tyr lay hidden.



The giantess screamed when the kettles fell, but she held her breath when she saw that the largest one was still whole. Out stepped Thor and Tyr, and stood bowing and smiling as if they didn't mind the noise at all.

Hymer scarcely glanced at Tyr, but he looked at Thor with an ugly frown, for he knew at once that this was one of the greatest gods of Asgard, though he did not know which one. Still, he could hardly turn him out of the house, so he

ordered three oxen for supper and gruffly invited the guests to sit down with him.

Now Thor was hungry, and at the sight of the things on the table his eyes sparkled. He began to eat eagerly, and soon had devoured two of the oxen.

Hymer opened his eyes wide at this. "You certainly can eat, my friend," said he. "After supper we shall see what else you can do."

So after supper the giant ordered his servants to take the great table out of the hall. "Now," said he to Thor, "show us your strength. Break this drinking cup if you can."



Thor did not know that it was a magic cup. He flung it on the floor with all his strength, but it did not break. It merely made a great hole in the stone.

“Ha, ha!” laughed the giant. “You have found something you cannot break. Have you not?”

Thor was angry. Again he threw the cup, this time at a marble pillar, but it merely bounced back to the middle of the floor.

The giant thought this the funniest thing he had ever seen. “Try again,” he shouted. “Try again.”

Thor did not like being laughed at, you may be sure. He knew by this time that the cup must be a magic cup, but how was he to break it?

Just then he heard a soft voice say in his ear, “Throw the cup at Hymer’s forehead.” Thor seized the cup and hurled it with all his might



at the giant's forehead. Smash! The cup lay on the stone floor in a thousand pieces, but Hymer's forehead was not even scratched.

"Well, well, Friend," said the giant. "That was well done. Now you must perform a harder task. Let me see you lift the great kettle."

Thor and Tyr looked at each other. This was just what they wanted. Thor walked over to the fire where the great kettle stood. He took

hold of the handles and put forth all his strength. Lifting the kettle and placing it on his head, he walked out of the hall.

Now Thor and Tyr had on winged shoes, and before the giant had thought of following them they had covered many miles of ground.

However, when Thor and Tyr looked back, they saw a great crowd of giants coming after them. "You must stop them, Tyr," said Thor. "They will soon catch us and we shall have to give them back their precious kettle."

"You have your hammer," said Tyr. "Let us stop and use it."

So Thor put down the kettle, and soon was swinging his magic hammer among the giants.

When the noise had stopped and the echoes had died away, there was not a giant to be seen. So Thor took up the kettle once more and they went on to Æger's palace, where the Sea God soon made all the mead that was wanted.

THE MAGIC APPLES

Once upon a time Odin and Loki started on a journey together. They traveled all day through a lonely country, where not a house nor a person was to be seen.

“We must soon come to a house,” said Odin, “and perhaps the people will give us some dinner.”

The sun sank low in the sky, but still there was no house to be seen, and there was not even a berry or a nut to be picked by the way. They felt as if they were starving, when from the top of a high hill they saw a herd of cattle.

“See!” cried Loki. “There is our dinner.”

They ran down the hill into the meadow and caught one of the oxen. In a very short time they had a fine dinner roasting over a great fire. Then they sat down to wait.

“Our dinner must be done now,” said Loki after a long while.

But no. It was not nearly done. Another half hour went by, but the meat was as raw as ever.

“What can be the matter?” asked Loki. “This must be magic meat.”

Just then a voice came from the oak tree over their heads. They looked up and saw sitting in the tree a great eagle, larger than any bird they had ever seen before. There he sat staring at them.

“What is the matter with your dinner?” asked the Eagle. “You must be very bad cooks. Give me a share, and I’ll soon have your dinner ready for you.”

“By all means,” said Loki.

So the Eagle flew down, and in a very short time had the dinner ready.

“Now take your share,” said Odin. He thought that a small piece would be enough. But the Eagle was hungry. He seized a leg and both shoulders of the ox, and started to fly away.



THEY SAW SITTING IN THE TREE A GREAT EAGLE.



“Stop, Thief!” cried Loki. “That is more than your share. You did not earn all that. Drop it, I say.” And taking a pole, he began to beat the Eagle.

Then a strange thing happened. One end of the pole stuck to the Eagle’s back, and Loki was not able to let go of the other end.

Away flew the Eagle, now high, now low, screaming with delight.

“Stop! Stop!” cried Loki. But the Eagle flew on, dragging him through bushes and briers, over trees and rocks and hills, till Loki thought he should die.

“Ha, Loki!” the Eagle laughed. “You cannot get away unless I say so. You are under a spell, but I will let you go if you will do one thing for me.”

Poor Loki was so sore and bruised that he was ready to agree to anything.

“Well,” said the Eagle, “I am really a giant, and I want the magic apples which the gods eat to keep them from growing old. Promise to get them for me and I will let you go.”

These apples were magic apples, as the giant had said. They were very beautiful to look at, but the best thing about them was that whoever ate one became young again.

Loki replied, "You know they are the most precious things in all Asgard. How in the world can I get them?"

"Steal them," said the Eagle gruffly.

"That would be impossible," said Loki. "They are too carefully guarded. Idun has nothing to do but to take care of the basket in which the apples are kept. One cry from her, and all Asgard would fly to help her."

"Being a giant," said the Eagle, "I cannot enter the city of the gods. But if you will coax Idun outside the city gates, I will carry her away, apples and all. You need not do anything more. Promise, and I will let you go."

Loki thought and thought. "Let me go," he said at last. "Within a week you will find Idun with the apples outside the city gates."

Thereupon the Eagle flew down and gently dropped Loki on a soft bed of moss.

One day after Loki had been released by the

Eagle, he went to see Idun as she was putting away her apples in the beautiful basket in which she kept them. "Good morning, fair Idun," said Loki politely. "How beautiful your apples are!"

"Yes," said Idun, "they are beautiful. They are the most beautiful apples in the world."

"I don't know about that," said Loki. "I have seen some that are more beautiful."

"I do not believe you," cried Idun.



“Well,” said Loki, “I can show them to you. The apples that I saw were larger and sweeter than yours.”

“I do not believe you,” said Idun again. “Still,” she added, “I should like to see them. Where are they?”

“Outside the gates of the city,” said Loki. “They grow on a little tree in the woods.”

“Take me to see them, Loki,” said Idun. “Is it very far away?”

“Not very far,” said Loki. “Just outside the gates. Bring your apples with you so that we may compare them with mine.”

So they started off together, Idun carrying the



golden basket which held her apples. They had just stepped outside the gates when, with a great whirring of wings, down came a mighty eagle and fastening his claws in Idun's belt, flew away with her to the land of the giants.

Loki went back to the city, thinking that no one would ever find out about this new piece of mischief.

At first the gods did not miss Idun, but as the days went by and there were no magic apples to make them feel young and look beautiful, they began to be alarmed. After a time their alarm turned to terror. Their hair was beginning to grow white, and they began to move about slowly like old people.

Finally they held a council to find out who had last seen Idun. They found that Loki had been seen with her strolling in the direction of the city gates. "Ah," said the gods, "now we understand."



Loki was caught and bound and brought before the council. "Tell us the truth," they said, "or you die."

Loki was so frightened that he told all about his promise to the giant.

"Alas! What shall we do?" wailed the gods. "Idun is stolen away, and we shall grow old and ugly." The gods were so angry that they were going to kill Loki at once. But Odin said, "Bring Idun back from the land of the giants, and you may live."

“How shall I do that?” asked Loki.

“How do I know?” retorted Odin. “That is for you to find out.”

For a moment Loki thought, then he said, “Give me the dress of a falcon, and I will bring her back.”

So the gods gave him a falcon dress, and when he had put it on, he flew away.

He traveled for many days, till at last he saw before him the great castle of the giant. He questioned the birds that he met in the woods near by, and they told him that the giant had gone hunting. “Ah,” said Loki, “now is the time to take Idun home.”

When he reached the castle, he hopped upon a window sill and looked in. There was poor Idun, weeping for her home in Asgard. She heard the flapping of the great wings and looked up.

“Come along, Idun,” said the Falcon. “I have come to take you home.”



Idun stopped crying and seized the basket of apples. "I am ready," she said. "But how shall I get out? The door is locked and the window is barred."

"I'll change you into a nut," said Loki. "I will carry you in one claw and the basket of apples in the other."

He did so and off they started.

It was not long before the giant came home, and finding Idun and her apples gone, put on his eagle dress and flew after them.

Now an eagle is very much larger than a falcon and can fly much more swiftly. So it was not long before Loki heard the scream of the Eagle behind him. He flew faster and faster over mountains and rivers and forests, but nearer and nearer came the great Eagle.

The gods were all upon the walls of the city watching the race. They soon saw that something must be done to stop the Eagle. So they piled heaps of wood upon the city walls.

Tired and sick, the Falcon passed over and fell half dead just inside the walls.

Instantly the great piles of wood were set on fire, and the Eagle, who was going too fast to stop, flew straight into the flames. His feathers caught fire and he fell helpless to the ground. The next moment Thor killed him with his magic hammer.

Then the gods gathered around the magic apples, and as they ate, they became young and beautiful once more.



A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all
through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse ;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with
care,

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there ;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads ;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's
nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave a luster of midday to objects below ;
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by
name :

“Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and
Vixen!

On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall,
Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!”
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the
sky ;

So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
With a sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a
bound ;

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and
soot ;



A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his
pack.

His eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples, how
merry!

His cheeks were like roses; his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the
snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath.
He was chubby and plump — a right jolly old elf;
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.

A wink of his eye, and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his
work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a
jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a-thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of
sight,
“ Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!”



HERCULES AND HIS LABORS

Hercules was a great hero, who lived long ago
in a country called Greece.

Before this hero was born, the King of the Gods
had said that he should be the greatest of men.

Juno, the Queen of the Gods, wanted a cousin of

Hercules to be the greatest man, so one day she turned to Jupiter, and asked, "Of two cousins, which one shall rule the other, the older or the younger?"

"The older of the two must rule," replied Jupiter.

This suited Juno very well.

When these boys had grown up, the cousin became king of a near-by country, and Juno contrived that Hercules should be sent to serve him.

This king was wicked and very cruel to Hercules. He ordered him to perform tasks that were not only very difficult, but as he thought, impossible.

"Do these things for me," said the king, "and I will set you free."

So Hercules commenced his labors. But the king did not intend that Hercules should become free. He intended to give him tasks which he was sure Hercules could not perform.

The first task was to kill a great lion. This fierce animal lived in a forest. He robbed people of their cattle. He was so strong that he could kill a man with one blow of his huge paw. When he roared, the sound could be heard many miles away. He was a monster with a hide so tough that no sword could pierce it.

For several days Hercules searched for this lion, and at last found him. He pulled up a young oak tree by the roots, and with it drove the beast into a cave. Following in boldly, he choked him to death. Then he threw the carcass over his shoulders, and carried it to his master.



The king was surprised. Indeed, he was frightened. "I must give him a harder task," he said to himself. "I must give him something to do which will surely be too difficult." "Hercules," he cried, "I have a brother who lives in the next country. He has the largest and dirtiest stable in the world. It has not been cleaned in thirty years. Go and clean it."

Hercules was dismayed. He knew that no man was strong enough to perform this task. But what should he do? He could not disobey, because the god had said that he must serve. So he set out with a sad heart. He traveled many days, and at last reached the stable. He looked at the great building. It was large enough to hold three thousand oxen. "Alas!" said Hercules. "It would take me years to clean this stable. I don't believe I could ever do it."

But a happy thought came to him as he looked around. He saw a great river that ran

near by, and he said to himself, "Why not use that?"

Thereupon he dug a ditch from the river to the stable, and let the water run through the building, in at one door and out at the other. When the river was shut off again, the stable was as clean as it could be. Then Hercules went happily home to his master.

The king was more surprised than when Hercules had killed the lion. Angry that Hercules could do these hard tasks so easily, he determined that the next task should be impossible. For many days he thought and thought.

At last he called Hercules to him, and commanded him to bring to the palace a team of oxen that were kept on an island in the middle of the sea.

These oxen belonged to an ogre who had three heads. His three mouths breathed out smoke and flames.

Hercules's heart grew heavy. "How can I get these oxen?" thought he. "Surely, surely, I shall never be free."

Weary and hopeless he went to the seashore, and looked around for a boat. "How shall I cross the sea?" he asked himself. "There is no boat here."

The Sun heard him, and called out, "I'll help you, Hercules. I'll lend you my golden boat."

Hercules embarked in the Sun's golden boat, and soon reached the island safely.

But it was not easy to kill the ogre.

"Do you see those bones?" asked the ogre.



“They are all that is left of the people who have come here.”

“Either I shall add yours to the heap, or you will add mine,” answered Hercules.

The battle was long and fierce. Once it seemed that the ogre would win, but Hercules was too swift of foot and strong of arm. With his mighty sword he struck off the three heads, and laid the ogre low.

After that he drove the oxen across the fields and into the golden boat. Then he put up his sails, and away went the boat over the sea to the land of Hercules's master.

Now the King and the Queen of the Gods had been watching Hercules to see whether he would really try to do all the things that his wicked master had asked him to do.

When Hercules had killed the ogre and had taken the ogre's oxen to his master, the King and the Queen of the gods said to each other,



“Hercules is a brave man. We will reward him for his wonderful courage.”

So the very night on which Hercules reached his master's house, they came down from the sky in their thunder chariot. “O Hercules!” said they. “You have done wonderful things, but the most wonderful is that you have been obedient. For that we give you your freedom.” And with a crash of thunder they were gone, and Hercules was free.

THE FALL OF TROY

A long time ago there was a city named Troy. For ten years the Greeks had laid siege to this city. Their ships lay outside in the harbor; their tents were set under the walls. But the soldiers of Troy were brave, and the Greeks could not force their way in through the walls. At last they thought of a plan by which they might gain an entrance.

One morning the Trojans, watching from the walls, were surprised to see the Greeks carrying boards and timber of all kinds to a spot so far away that the arrows of the Trojans could not reach them.

They watched for many days, wondering what the Greeks were building. At last they saw that the thing was taking the shape of a great horse. They did not know that it was hollow, and was to hold many warriors with spears and bows.

One night under cover of darkness, chosen Greek warriors climbed into the wooden horse, and the rest of their army embarked on ships which sailed away to find a hiding place behind a little island in the harbor of Troy.

When the sun came up next morning, there were no Greek ships to be seen, and not a single tent on the plain, nothing but the great wooden horse. The Trojans were delighted. "The Greeks have fled! The Greeks have fled!" they cried. They thought that the long siege was over, and they embraced one another, and shouted and laughed for joy.

By and by they opened the gates, which had been shut for ten long years. They went out on the plain, and walked around and around the great wooden animal, and wondered why the Greeks had made it, and why it had been left there. They said, "It is an evil thing. Let us throw it into the sea."



While they were talking the matter over, a Greek was dragged into the city. The shepherds had found him in the bushes. He said that his people had gone off and left him. Since they were so cruel to him, he would tell the Trojans all about the wooden horse, and why the Greeks had made it.

The Trojans gave him leave to speak.

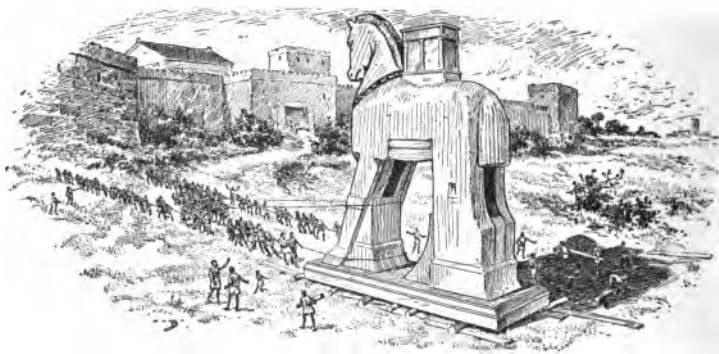
"This horse," said the Greek, "is an offering to the gods. My people left it here because they

thought it was too heavy for you to move. But if the horse once stands within the walls of Troy, the city cannot be captured."

The Trojans listened and believed the cunning tale. "Ha, ha!" they cried. "We will have the wooden horse within the city to-night."

They placed the great horse upon rollers, fastened ropes to it, and men, women, and children began to pull.

When they reached the gates, they found the opening too small, so they pulled down a part of the wall till the opening was large enough to admit the horse.



“ Now our city is safe from every enemy,” said the Trojans. So they made a great feast, and when that was over, they went to bed. For the first time in ten years there was no watchman on the walls of Troy.

When the noises of the city had died down, the Greeks came out of the wooden horse, and set up a beacon light to tell the Greeks on the ships that it was time for them to come and to attack the city. The ships set sail for the harbor, and the soldiers, having disembarked in silence, entered the gates of Troy.

At last the Trojans awoke, but with the sound of battle in their ears. Greek soldiers filled the city. They set fire to the houses, they robbed the palaces, and carried the treasure to their ships.

Helpless, the Trojans watched the flames mount to the sky, and when the light of the fire died out, their city lay in ashes.

THE BAG OF WINDS

Far away from here, far out in the middle of the sea on a beautiful green island was the home of the Winds.

There were great stone walls which kept the Winds from getting into mischief. Besides this, the Winds had a keeper named Æolus to tell them just what to do.

Æolus was kept busy day and night. He had to see that the nuts were shaken off the trees, and that the seeds were blown over the world. He had to send rain in the summer and snow in the winter. But all the year round he had to be sure that there was enough wind to blow the ships along.

As a rule the Winds were good, and did just as they were told, but sometimes they were mischievous, and when Æolus was not by to keep them in order they did dreadful things.



Once upon a time a ship stopped at this island of the Winds. The captain hoped to fill the water casks and to get some fresh fruit and meat, and the sailors who had grown tired of the ship wished to rest awhile.

The captain and the sailors were delighted when they discovered that they had come to the home of the Winds. "O Æolus!" they cried. "Tell the West Wind to blow, for we wish to reach our homes quickly."

So Æolus killed a great ox, and made a leather

bag of the skin. Into this bag he put all the contrary Winds, leaving the West Wind free. With his own hands he tied the bag, and gave it to the captain of the ship.

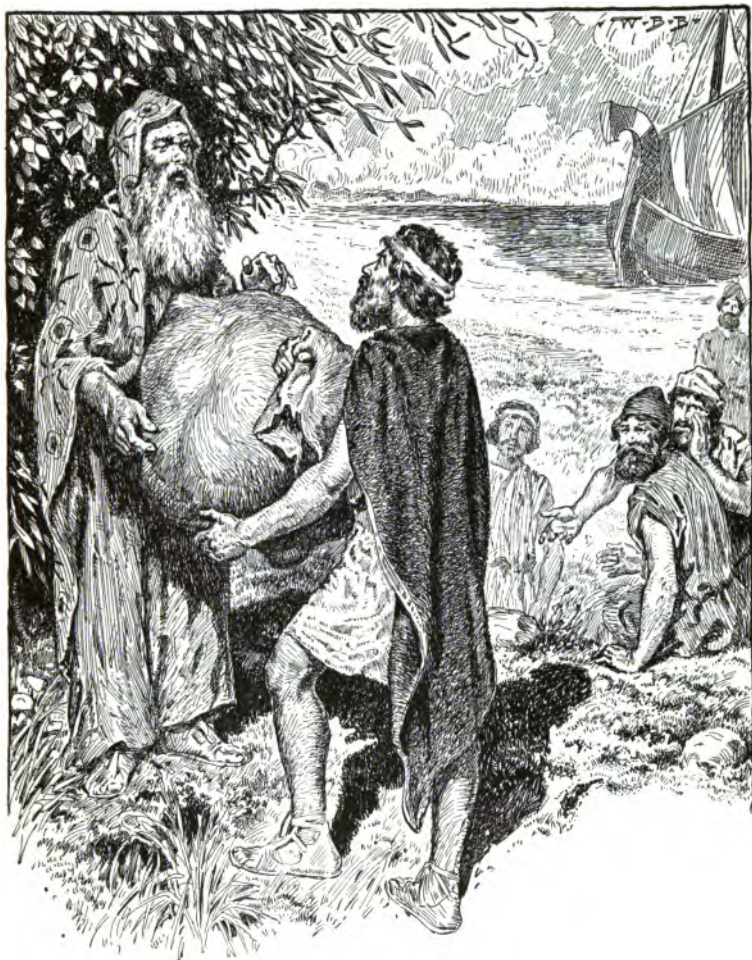
“Fasten this bag to the mast of your ship, and do not open it. If you do, trouble will follow,” was the warning of Æolus.

The ship sailed away. The West Wind blew softly and steadily, the sun shone, and the sailors were happy. Each day brought them nearer home.

Day and night the ship sailed over smooth waters. On the evening of the ninth day the sailors saw the blue hills of their own land rising out of the sea.

“To-morrow will see us at home,” said the captain, and tired with watching, he fell asleep.

Now the sailors thought that the bag which Æolus had given to the captain was full of silver and gold. When they saw that the captain slept, they opened the bag to rob him of his treasure.



"FASTEN THIS BAG TO THE MAST OF YOUR SHIP."

The angry Winds, tired and cramped because they had been shut up so long in the bag, rushed out. As Æolus was not there to keep them in order, they did just as they pleased. They raged and roared and flung themselves wildly about.

The West Wind begged them to stop, but they would not. They drove the ship far out to sea in a fierce storm.

After long toil and much suffering the captain came back to the island of the Winds to beseech Æolus once more for aid.

The keeper of the Winds was surprised to see the ship again. "Why have you come back?" he asked.

The captain told him the story of how the Winds had been set free.

Æolus was very angry at this tale. "Begone!" he cried. "The favor of Æolus is only for the wise. He gives nothing to the foolish."

Sorrowfully they embarked and departed, but

they had no favorable West Wind to hurry them along. The sailors were obliged to ply their oars against wind and wave, and it was many years before they came in sight of their own land again.



THE WIND AND THE MOON

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out ;
You stare
In the air
Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about —
I hate to be watched, I'll blow you out."

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
So, deep
On a heap
Of clouds to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon."



He turned in his bed ; she was there again !

On high

In the sky,

With her one ghost eye,

The Moon shone white and alive and plain.

Said the Wind, " I will blow you out again."

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim

" With my sledge

And my wedge,

I have knocked off her edge!

If only I blow right fierce and grim,

The creature will soon be dimmer than dim."

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread

“ One puff

More's enough

To blow her to snuff!

One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glim, glum will go the thread.”

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone.

In the air

Nowhere

Was a moonbeam bare ;

Far off and harmless the shy stars shone —

Sure and certain the Moon was gone.

The wind he took to his revels once more ;

On down,

In town,

Like a merry-mad clown,

He leaped and hallooed with whistle and roar —

“ What's that ? ” The glimmering thread once
more !

Slowly she grew — till she filled the night,

And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful, silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind, "What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
Good faith!
I blew her to death—
First blew her away right out of the sky,
Then blew her in. What strength have I!"

But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;
For high
In the sky,
With her one white eye,
Motionless, miles above the air,
She had never heard the great Wind blare.

— GEORGE MACDONALD



ROMULUS AND REMUS

One midsummer eve two baby boys were born.

Their mother was a friend of the fairies, so of course all the fairies came to see the babies.

By and by the queen of the fairies swept up in her golden chariot. She called her people together and said, "These babies have a wicked uncle who will surely kill them if he can. We must watch over them, since their father is dead. I will stay here with them to-night so that no harm may come to them."

When the moon came out, all the fairies said good-by to the babies, and flew away to dance in the woods.

The queen sat by the cradle, but nobody could see her. Sometimes she rocked it, sometimes she whispered to the babies, and the babies smiled in their sleep. Everybody wondered at this and said, "Perhaps the fairies are singing to them."



Now the wicked uncle really did wish to get rid of the babies, just as the fairy had said.

Many years before, this uncle, who was king of that country, had stolen the throne from the grandfather of these two babies.

When he heard of their birth, he was afraid that if they grew up they would kill him, and take the throne away from him. So that very night he called one of his servants, and said to him, "Take the cradle with the babies in it to the forest, and leave it there."

While the nurse slept, the servant crept into

the room and stole the babies. With the cradle in his arms he crept down the marble stairs and out into the road. All the way to the forest he seemed to hear the sound of singing, but though he looked around, he could see no one. "It is only the wind in the trees," he said. He did not know that the queen of the fairies was flying close to the cradle, and that it was the sound of her wings that he heard.

He put the cradle down at the foot of a big tree, and hurried away.

No sooner was he out of sight than the fairy queen waved her wand nine times. At once the forest was full of fairies, some dressed in gold, some in blue, and some in green.

The queen called them to her. "Look!" said she. "Here lie the princes of this land. If we leave them here in the forest they will die. Let us carry the cradle to the river, and float them away from their wicked uncle."



At once four of the fairies lifted the cradle, flew to the river, and placed the cradle on the water.

The queen waved her wand again, and the cradle became a dainty little boat. The sail was of crimson silk, and there were soft cushions for the babies to rest upon.

The fairies crowded into the boat, the sail filled, and the fairy boat moved down the river.

All night long the little boat sailed, and the

fairies sang. The moon and the stars came out from behind the clouds to listen, and the little birds woke up to answer the song.

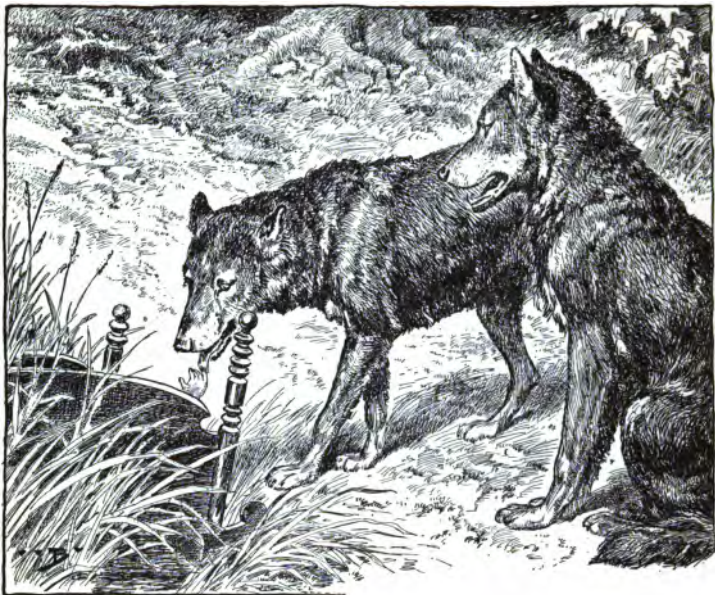
When morning came, the fairies ran the boat up to the shore. The queen waved her wand, and the boat became once more a cradle. "Some one will come and take the babies," said the fairies. "We will watch and see."

Very near the spot where the cradle lay was a great cave. In this cave lived two Wolves.

That morning Father Wolf had gone out to hunt. But very soon he came back. "Mother Wolf," he said, "there is something queer lying on the bank of the river. Come with me, and we will see what it is."

The two Wolves hurried down to the river bank. "It looks like a box," said Mother Wolf. "Perhaps there is something evil in it."

"It is not alive," said Father Wolf. "It cannot hurt us. Do not be afraid."



They went close to the cradle. "See!" said Mother Wolf. "See! Two little babies! I have never been so close to babies before. How white and soft they are!"

She put her nose close up to one of them, and it crowed and smiled at her. "They are not at all afraid," said she. "We will take them home, and they can play with our children."

That is how the babies came to live in the cave of the Wolves.

Father and Mother Wolf took good care of the little strangers. The baby Wolves liked them. Sometimes the fairies changed themselves into birds, and brought them berries. When night came, the fairy birds sang them to sleep.

One day when the babies were playing with the little Wolves, a shepherd saw them. "The Wolves have stolen those children," he said to himself, "and are going to eat them." So he drove the Wolves away, and carried the babies to his own cottage. Not long after that he found their cradle on the river bank, and took it home with him.

He named the babies Romulus and Remus, and brought them up as his own sons. They lived out on the hillside with the sheep, and grew to be great strong boys. They could run faster than other shepherd boys. They could throw a stone farther, and jump higher.

One day Romulus and Remus ran a race, and each one claimed to be the winner.

"I won," said Romulus.

"No. It was I," said Remus.

As they could not settle the question, they agreed to ask the king of that country to decide it. So they traveled a long way till they came to the palace of the king.

Now it happened that this king was their grandfather.

He looked at Romulus, and admired his height and beauty. "Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Romulus," said the boy, "and I keep sheep for my foster father. He says that my brother Remus and I were found on the bank of a river."

When the king heard this, he felt that these boys must be his grandchildren lost so many years ago. "Bring your foster father here," he commanded.



The shepherd came, and told the story of the babies and the cradle.

The cradle was sent for. When the king saw it, he knew that these boys were his grandsons.

He told them how his throne had been stolen from him, how he had been forced to flee from his own country, and how he had established a new kingdom.

“Now that I have found you,” said he, “we will win back my rightful kingdom, and you shall reign there as kings.”

BRIGHTEYES

A long time ago there lived an old witch. This witch had two children. The elder was very beautiful, but the younger was the ugliest child that was ever seen. His mother was greatly troubled at this, but she said to herself, "If he cannot be beautiful, at least he shall be wise."

So she set to work to boil the Pot of Wisdom. This pot had to boil for a year and a day, and at the end of the time there would be left in the bottom of the pot three drops. Whoever tasted these drops would be wise forever.

The old witch had a servant named Gwyn, whom she set to watch and to stir this pot. Day after



day he watched and stirred. On the last day, when the boiling was almost done, the old witch was out in the fields gathering herbs. The pot grew so hot that the last three drops sizzled and sputtered out on Gwyn's finger. He quickly put the finger in his mouth, and then and there became wise. At once he knew that his mistress was a witch. This frightened him so that he ran away.

When the old witch came in from the field, she found no one in the kitchen. She looked in the pot, but it was empty. This made her very angry, for she knew that her work would have to be done all over again. She called, but no one answered. "Ah," she said to herself, "my servant has run away." So she ran after him as fast as she could.

Gwyn, looking back and seeing that the witch would soon catch up with him, changed himself into a hare. As soon as he became a hare, she changed herself into a greyhound and had nearly caught him, when he plunged into the

river, at the same time changing himself into a fish.

Then she became an otter, and chased him for a very long time till he left the water and took the form of a bird. But at once the old witch changed herself into a hawk, and he had to fly fast to get away from her.

He was just about to give up, when he saw a heap of wheat on the floor of a barn. At once he changed himself into a grain of wheat. Then the old witch changed herself into a black hen, and scratched among the grains till she found him. She was about to eat him when he became a beautiful little child.

Having taken her own shape again, she put the child into a leather bag and threw it into the river.

The very day that the old witch threw the bag into the river, a young man, named Eiphin, and a friend went fishing.

They cast their nets over the side of the boat,



but when they drew them up, there was nothing in them but an old leather bag.

“We are unlucky,” said the friend. “Where have the fish gone? That bag is worth nothing.”

But Elphin said, “Perhaps there may be something of great worth in the bag. Let us open it and see.”

So they opened the bag, and out peeped the sparkling eyes of a little child.

“Look!” cried the friend. “What bright eyes!”

“Let us call him Brighteyes,” said Elphin.

On the way home Elphin asked the child whether

he was a fairy. "No," said Brighteyes, "I am not a fairy, but I am very wise." Then he told Elphin why he had run away from the old witch, and how he had come to be in the leather^hbag.

When Elphin reached his home, he gave little Brighteyes to his wife, who brought him up as one of her own sons.

From that time forth Elphin became rich, and grew in favor with the king.

Brighteyes had been with Elphin several years, when Elphin happened to displease the king, who took away his lands and money, and threw him into prison.

When Brighteyes heard of this, he at once set out for the king's palace. He told his friends not to be afraid, for he would make the king release Elphin.

Brighteyes reached the palace just as the minstrels were about to sing their songs in praise of the king, as they did every evening.



Brighteyes entered without being seen, and seated himself at the lower end of the hall. He then cast a spell upon the minstrels so that, instead of singing, they could only make faces at the king, and tap their fingers against their lips, crying, "Blr! Blr!"

The king thought either that his minstrels had gone mad, or that they were making fun of him.

Calling his captain, he said angrily, "Have the chief minstrel beaten at once. Perhaps that will bring him to his senses."

The captain seized the chief minstrel, and beat him soundly. This broke the spell, and the minstrel explained that neither he nor his singers could help acting as they did, because they were under a spell, cast upon them by a boy sitting at the lower end of the hall.

"Bring the rascal to me," roared the king.

The soldiers seized Brighteyes, and brought him to the foot of the throne, where he bowed low.

The king scowled at him. "Who are you?" he growled. "What do you want?"

The boy answered, "I am Brighteyes, and I am come to free Elphin, who lies in prison in this castle."

The king frowned. "I will not let him go," he said.

Then Brighteyes told the king that a terrible

storm would come up from the sea to destroy his castle unless he set Elphin free at once. On hearing this, the king and the nobles laughed.

Brighteyes turned and went to the open door. Standing there, he sang a charm to the wind, bidding it blow and blow till it burst open the door of the prison.

At once there rose a dreadful storm that rocked the great castle. The king waited in terror, expecting every moment that the castle would fall upon his head. Brighteyes stood quietly in the midst of the uproar. "Let Elphin go, O King," said he, "and I will stop the storm."

A fierce gust tore at the castle roof, and drove in the windows, causing the nobles to cry out in alarm.

In great fear the king sent his soldiers to bring Elphin to the hall. At once the storm died down, and peace was restored.



Elphin was carried into the hall, loaded with chains. As the king would not order the soldiers to release him, Brighteyes sang a charm and the chains fell off. So Elphin was free.

“Come,” said Brighteyes. “We will go home.”

The king started up from his throne and gave orders to guard the door, but Brighteyes sang another charm, and no one in the hall, from the king to the smallest page, was able to move.

Elphin and Brighteyes went out of the hall between the helpless guards, and soon reached home, where they lived long and happily.

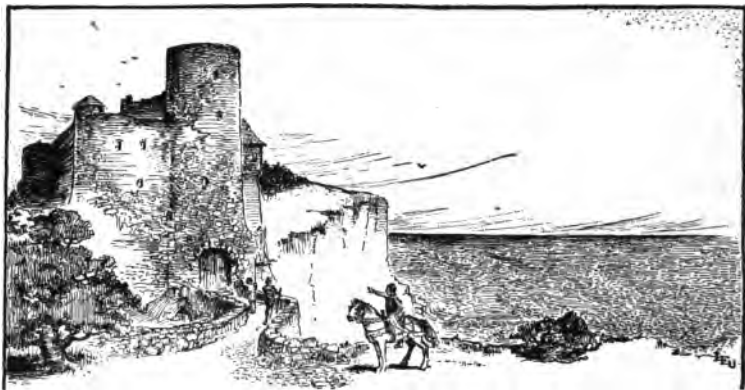
HOW ARTHUR WAS MADE KING

Long, long ago there was a king of England named Uther. In the course of time he died, and as he had no son to take his throne, England was without a king for many years.

There were so many knights who wished to reign in his stead that the wise men had great trouble to make a choice.

At last they turned to Merlin, the wisest of all the wise men, an enchanter and prophet in whom they all believed. "Let us go to London," he said, "and there we shall find out who should be king."

So the wise men went to London. In the churchyard of the great cathedral where they went to worship they found sunk in the ground a great stone with a sword thrust in it up to the hilt. Engraven on its face were these words, "The one who pulls this sword out of the stone shall be king."



Then the wise men sent messengers throughout the land, to summon the knights to come to the church in London and seek a sign from God.

On the appointed day there assembled in the city a splendid host of lords and barons, mounted on prancing war horses. The knights were in shining armor from head to foot. Their belts were of gold. Golden spurs were fastened on their heels.

At the churchyard of the great cathedral they dismounted. With the wise men leading them, they entered the church to worship and to see

what sign God would give to show them who should be king.

After the service was over the wise men led the worshipers out into the churchyard and showed them the stone.

“This must be the sign,” they said. “Let each knight try his strength. Whoever pulls out the sword shall be king.”

These knights, old and young, were all strong men, and each one put forth his full strength, but not one of them could move the sword.

“Alas!” said the wise men. “You have all tried, but there is not one among you strong enough. We shall have to choose a king.”

But Merlin said, “No one may sit on England’s throne who cannot draw this sword. We have not yet found our king.”

One of the knights named Sir Hector had brought with him his foster son Arthur, who, though not yet a man, was tall and strong. When



Merlin saw him standing by, he said, "Let Arthur, son of Hector, come and try."

Arthur quietly stepped forward, laid his hand upon the sword, and drew it lightly from the stone.

When the people saw this, they shouted, "Arthur is our king! Arthur is our king!"

"No, no! Away with him!" cried a hundred knights, each one of whom wanted to be king. "He is only a boy. He cannot be king."

"Then," said Merlin, "do what he has done."

With his magic power Merlin put the sword back into the stone, and the knights tried once more to pull it out. But they could not move it.

Then Arthur tried again, and the moment he touched the sword it moved lightly from its place.

When the people and the knights saw this, they cried with one voice, "Arthur is our king!"



MY SHADOW

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with
me,

And what can be the use of him is more than I
can see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to the
head;

And I see him jump before me, when I jump into
my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes
to grow —

*From "Poems and Ballads," by Robert Louis Stevenson, copyright, 1895, 1896,
by Charles Scribner's Sons.*

Not at all like proper children, which is always
very slow ;

For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-
rubber ball,

And he sometimes gets so little that there's none
of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to
play,

And can only make a fool of me in every sort of
way.

He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you .
can see ;

I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow
sticks to me !

One morning very early, before the sun was
up,

I rose and found the shining dew on every butter-
cup ;

But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-
head,

Had stayed at home behind me and was fast
asleep in bed.



THE BELL OF ATRI

Halfway up a hillside in Italy stood the small town of Atri.

In the market place of the town, under a belfry roof, the King hung a great bell. Then he rode through the streets, followed by all his royal train. With a long, loud blast of the trumpets he called together the people.

“My people,” said he, “should any one of you suffer wrong, ring this bell and I will have my judge decide your cause.”

The days passed swiftly, for the people were content; but as all things decay, at length the bell rope wore away.

One day a friendly passer-by braided some growing vines of briony into the loosened strands. The leaves and the tendrils of the vines made the mended rope look like a garland.

There dwelt a knight in Atri whose favorite pastime had been the chase. He had loved his horses and his hounds, but having grown old, he now liked better to count his gold.

He sold his hounds and horses and falcons, and rented his broad lands. Then he sat down to think of how he could get more gold.

He had kept one horse, but he left him to starve and shiver in an empty stall.

At last he turned the poor brute out to hunt his own food. "For," said he, "what is the need of keeping this lazy horse at my own cost? I want him only for the holidays."



Out into the long, shadeless streets of the town and through the lanes of the country the horse wandered. Dogs barked at him, thorns and briars tore his flesh and matted his tail and mane.

One day the inhabitants of Atri were startled by the loud alarm of the bell. It seemed to say, "Some one — hath done — a wrong — hath done — a wrong!"

The Judge heard the clanging of the bell, and rising from his couch, put on his robes and went out into the great square. There he saw before him, within the shade of the belfry, not a man, but a miserable, lean horse eagerly tugging at the vines of briony. "Domeneddio!" cried the Judge. "This is the Knight of Atri's steed. He pleads for justice, and he shall have it."

Meanwhile a crowd had gathered. There was much noise while each tried to tell the story of how the knight had abused the wretched beast.

"Bring hither the knight," was the Judge's command.

The knight was brought to the market place. He was questioned, but at first treated the matter as a jest. At last he became angry and muttered, "May I not do as I please with my own?"

"Sir Knight, you are proud," replied the Judge, "but what honor do you expect from starving this poor brute? This horse was your good and



faithful servant when he was young. I command you to provide him with shelter and food in his old age.”

The Knight of Atri hung his head in shame and left the square. The townspeople followed, leading the steed home in triumph to his stall.

The King heard the tale and gleefully cried, “This gives me much pleasure! The Bell of Atri has pleaded well for one of God’s dumb creatures.”

THE PROUD KING

It was evening. King Robert was in church listening to the chants. Over and over again the choir sang, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree."

King Robert smiled scornfully. "Ah," said he, "there is no one who can push me from my throne." And leaning back, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, it was night; the place was in darkness save for one tiny lamp that lit the altar. The king started up and stumbled to the door. But the door was locked. He shouted and beat upon it with his fists.

At length the old sexton heard the noise. "Thieves are in the church," said he. So he lighted his lantern and went to see. "Who is there?" he called.

"Open the door," cried King Robert angrily. "It is I, the king."



The sexton was frightened. "The king holds a banquet to-night," he said. "Who are you?" But he had no chance to see, for through the open door a man without hat or cloak rushed past.

On went the king to the palace gates, past the guards and up the great staircase to the banquet hall. At the door he paused, for there on his throne sat another king, his exact image, wearing his robes and his crown.

"Stand back!" cried the guards, but to no effect, for the breathless man sprang forward to the foot of the throne.



“Who are you?” asked the new king, looking at him thoughtfully.

“I?” retorted King Robert. “I am the king. Step down from my throne.”

“No,” said the new king, “you are not fit to be the king. Kings should be noble, wise, and good. You shall be my jester.” He beckoned to the pages. “Give this fellow the cap and the bells, and take him to the servants’ hall.”

Amid the laughter of the guests King Robert was seized and hurried away.

The next morning his first thought was, “It

was all a bad dream." But no, there was his bed of straw and the cap and the bells. It was no dream.

The days went by. Sometimes the new king, meeting him on the stairs, would ask, "Art thou the king?"

King Robert would answer haughtily, "I am the king." And so he lived on, unhappy and sullen, trying to plan some way to get back his kingdom.

One day there came some messengers to King Robert from his brother, the emperor, asking the king to come to see the emperor at his home. The new king received the visitors gladly and gave them rich presents.

Then he returned with them. His train was splendid. There were soldiers in armor and knights in velvet cloaks. Among the servants rode King Robert. He was a strange figure. His cloak of fox tails hung over his saddle, and the



monkey, perched behind him, chattered and made faces at the passers-by.

The emperor embraced the new king and welcomed him as a dear brother. King Robert standing by could bear no more. He rushed toward the emperor, crying out, "I am your brother. Do you not know me? This king is an impostor."

The emperor laughed and said, "Brother, your jester is a madman." And King Robert was hurried away to his place among the servants.

The visit ended. The new king and his train returned to their home. One night at supper he beckoned to the jester and told the rest of his train to leave him. When the two were alone, he asked, "Art thou the king?"

King Robert bowed his head and answered, "I have been wicked and proud. Let me go away till my guilty soul is clean."

The new king smiled, and around his head shone a great light. "I am an angel," he said to Robert, "and thou art again the king."

The next moment King Robert was alone. His cap and his bells were gone, and instead there was the royal mantle and the sword of the king.

His heart was full of joy, and as he stood there alone in his palace, there came to him through the open window the chant, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree."

ALFRED THE GREAT

A long time ago, after King Arthur had died, there was a king of England named Alfred.

At that time the English were struggling against the Danes, then a rude, savage people who poured into England from over the seas and marched through the land killing the people, stealing the cattle, and burning the houses.

King Alfred was brave, and though he had a small army and little money, he defended his country well against these terrible foes.

Battle after battle was fought, but because the Danes came in ever increasing numbers, the English were often defeated. At last the enemy overran the entire country, the English army was scattered, and King Alfred was forced to flee for his life.

Homeless and with only six followers, he wandered in his flight up and down through the



wildest part of England. Sometimes he barely escaped from the fierce and eager Danes, who were always searching for him.

Often he hid in a cave or in a tree, while his faithful friends led the Danes away from his hiding place.

But still the enemy pursued him. They knew that if they could catch King Alfred, the English would be without a leader, and their victory would be complete.

When winter came, Alfred sent his six companions away. He felt that they would be safer in their own homes than with him. "Go," said he. "The time is coming when I shall rid my people of the Danes. Gather an army for me, and when the time is ripe, call me. I will come in haste, and together we will strike one more blow."

They knelt and kissed his hand and departed.

Now he was not only homeless, but entirely alone. He slept under the trees in the hollows and covered himself with leaves. He grew weary hunting for food.

At last he said, "I will flee no longer. I might better lose my life fighting the Danes than to die here in the woods from cold and hunger. I will seek my people and gather them for a last battle."

He left the forest and wandered about till he came to a marshy valley. There was no road and no house in sight.

Alfred paused and looked about him. At some



distance he saw a small herd of cattle. These he knew must have an owner, so he made his way through pools and marshes and over ditches to the place where they were.

As he approached, he saw an old man preparing to lead the cattle home to house them for the night. "God save you, good Father," said Alfred. "The Danish robbers have left me without house or money. Will you let me share a lodging with your master's cattle for the night?"

The old man looked at him keenly. "Perhaps," said he, "you are a Danish robber yourself. How do I know that you will not steal my master's cattle?"

"I am no Dane," said the king with a smile. "I am a Saxon."

"Well, then," said the old cowherd, who was won by King Alfred's honest face, "you are welcome to a share of my calf's crib to-night. Perhaps you would like a supper as well as a bed."

"That I should," replied the king, "for I have not eaten to-day. I should be thankful for a bit of rye bread."

"Rye bread!" said the cowherd. "You will get nothing but oatcake from my dame this night."

"I am hungry enough to eat anything," said the king.

"Follow me, then," said the cowherd.

He led Alfred over a rough cattle track to a little cottage where he and his wife lived.

A bright fire was burning on the hearth, and the cowherd's wife was baking oatcakes and broiling fish over the coals.

"Bertha," said the cowherd, "I have brought you a guest who will be glad of a share of the fish and the cakes."

Bertha turned and looked at the stranger. "Have I nothing to do but bake cakes for all the beggars that roam the country?" she said.

"This is no beggar," replied the cowherd. "This is an honest Saxon who asks supper and shelter for the night. It will be charity to feed him." And taking the largest fish and the thickest cake, he put them on a wooden plate and



handed it to Alfred, saying, "Eat. You look hungry." Then he filled a wooden mug with cider and set it on the floor beside his hungry guest.

That night Alfred slept very comfortably in the crib with the little calf.

In the morning the cowherd took a wooden plate from the shelf and placed a big oaten cake on it. Then he filled a cup with milk and set the food before the stranger.

When they had eaten their early meal, the cowherd, who had been watching Alfred closely, drew him to one side and said, "Your clothes are poor, but are you not some mighty lord in disguise?"

The stranger replied, "I am neither beggar nor lord, but your king, Alfred. Do not betray me."

"Not for all the gold in England!" cried the cowherd.

The king remained all winter in the cottage.

Sometimes he passed whole days in hunting the wild ducks that lived in the marshes.

One day a great storm came up, and he could not go hunting as usual. So he set himself to make a new stock of arrows, while Bertha kneaded the oaten cakes for supper. When the cakes were ready, she placed them on the hearth and told Alfred to watch that they did not burn.

Alfred, who was thinking of his poor country overrun by savage Danes, went on making arrows and forgot the cakes on the hearth.

When Bertha came back she saw that the cakes were burned. "Lazy, useless fellow!" she cried. "You are ready enough to eat cakes, but it is too much trouble for you to keep them from burning."



Bertha did not know that she was talking to her king. She turned the cakes and grumbled as she did it.

Alfred kept on making his arrows. Soon he saw coming across the fields his faithful follower Ambrose, whom he had sent away. "Good Dame," said he, "here comes a poor pilgrim. May I give him one of these burned cakes?"

"Yes," muttered Bertha, "but nothing more."

Alfred took one of the cakes, and stepping outside the door, gave it to the pilgrim. Ambrose knew his master in spite of the rough clothes.

"What news?" asked Alfred.

"Good news," said Ambrose. "We have fought a battle and have won. All England is now in arms and demands that you come and lead."

"I am ready," replied Alfred. "Let us hasten."

The king and his companion traveled for two days and two nights. Early on the third morning

they saw on the plain below them the two armies drawn up in battle array.

Before Alfred could reach his army the battle had begun. The Danes had made a quick onset, and the English were being driven back, for the Danes were better fighters.

Quickly Alfred mounted the charger of a wounded knight and rode forward. The soldiers knew him, and rent the air with their cries, "King Alfred! King Alfred! King Alfred!"

They rallied around their leader. Now they were fearless. They fought like giants. In a terrible battle they swept back the Danes like chaff, and England once more was free.



KING JOHN AND THE MERCHANT

A long time ago there was a rich merchant. He lived in a large house and had many servants. He dressed in fine clothes, and when he went for a



ride, fifty soldiers wearing shining armor and golden chains followed him.

All this came to the ears of King John. “Ho, ho!” said he. “Does this merchant think he can live better than the king? Send for him. We will hear what he has to say.”

So the merchant came to the palace with the fifty soldiers in his train. Their golden chains jangled as the soldiers dashed up to the gate.

“How is this?” said the king. “They tell me you keep many servants, and that your house is finer than mine. You should not live better than the king.”

“Your Majesty,” said the merchant, “all the money that I spend is mine.”

“But it is not fit that you should live better than I,” said King John. “You have committed a crime. You must be punished. You shall lose your head.”

“Alas, your Majesty!” cried the merchant. “Must I die for that?”

“Yes,” said the king, “unless you can answer three questions which I shall put to you.”

Thereupon the king asked the merchant these three questions: “Where is the center of the earth? How long would it take me to ride around the world? What am I thinking about?”

The poor merchant was frightened, for he knew that he could not answer one of these questions. “Will you give me time to think, your Majesty?” he asked.

“You shall have six weeks,” said the king. “No more.”



The merchant was sore at heart, but he set out to find some one who could answer the questions. He went to the nearest town, and asked the merchants there, but they only laughed at him.

For many days he journeyed from town to town eagerly questioning every one he met, but no one could help him.

At last he traveled into the East to ask the wise men to answer his questions and save his life. When they told him that they could not help him, he turned away in great sorrow.

Very sadly he journeyed homeward. When he came near his own house, he met his shepherd,

who thought that he was just returning from the king.

“What news from King John?” asked the shepherd.

“Bad news! Bad news, Shepherd!” answered the merchant, and he told him all that had happened.

“Cheer up!” said the shepherd. “Things might be much worse. Let me go to the palace, and the king will not cut off your head.”

“Can you answer the questions?” cried the merchant in amazement.

“Lend me your velvet cloak and your soldiers,” said the shepherd, “and you shall see.”

So the shepherd put on the velvet cloak and mounted the merchant’s horse. Away he rode with the soldiers behind him until he came to the king’s palace.

“Welcome, Merchant,” said the king. “Are you ready to die?”

“I am ready to answer your questions,” replied the shepherd.

The king smiled. “Well, then, where is the center of the earth?”

“Here,” said the shepherd, stamping his foot on the ground. “If your Majesty does not believe me measure it and see.”

“Well answered,” said the king with a laugh. “Now answer the second question. How long would it take me to ride around the world?”

“That is soon done,” said the shepherd. “If your Majesty will rise with the sun and go with him till the next morning, you will ride around the world in one day.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the king. “I did not think it could be done so quickly. Now for the last question. What am I thinking about?”

“That is easy,” said the shepherd. “Your Majesty is thinking that I am the rich merchant, while I am only his shepherd.” He

threw off the velvet cloak, and there stood the shepherd.

The king laughed loud and long. "You are wiser than your master," he said. "I will give you his lands and his money, and you shall be the merchant. We will make him the shepherd."

"No, no!" said the shepherd. "I cannot read nor write."

"If that is true," said the king, "you could hardly be a merchant, but you shall have some reward. Here is a bag of gold for you."

So the shepherd went home with the bag of gold in his hand and joy in his heart.



DREAMS

At last I know where they are kept,
My own, own dreams;
At night I found them when I slept,
But now it seems
As if I only have to go
A little way,
And I can find them all, I know,
By night or day.

I do not even shut my eyes.
I sit and wait,
And pretty soon, wide open flies
A little gate;
All things I want come through to me,
And I can go
A-sailing, sailing on the sea —
Heave ho! Heave ho!

With pirates and with Indian braves
And robber bands
I hunt, and ride, and live in caves,
In foreign lands;

I hunt big buffaloes and lynx
And bears and deer,
While nurse sits mending — and she thinks
I'm sitting here.

— ROBERT GILBERT WELSH.



OLGER THE DANE

A long time ago a little baby was born whose name was Olger. His father was king of Denmark, so everybody called him Olger the Dane.

He was a beautiful little baby, so beautiful that all the fairies heard of him and came to see him. They were so pleased with him that each one gave him a gift.

One fairy said, "I will make you a strong man and a brave soldier." Another said, "I will give you battles to fight." The third said, "I will make you wise and gentle."

When all the others had spoken, the queen of the fairies took Olger in her arms. "There is

nothing left to give you," she said, "but this I will promise you. You shall never die."

Then the fairies kissed him and flew away.

When Olger grew up he became a soldier, and fought for Charles, king of France. The soldiers loved him. They followed him and his coal-black horse wherever he led them, and the battle cry of the army was, "Olger! Olger the Dane!"

At last he had won so many battles that all the enemies of France were driven away, and the land was free once more.

Then King Charles made Olger king over a dependent province, and sent him there to live. When Olger was an old man, he wished to see Charles once more, so he set sail across the seas.

One night a great storm came up, the rain fell, and the wind blew. The sails split, and the ship rocked on the waves. Olger saw that she could not live long in such a stormy sea.

Suddenly a voice came out of the storm saying,
“Olger, I wait. Come, and do not be afraid.”

So the king threw himself into the sea, and the waves carried him far up on the shore and placed him on a high rock.

When he awoke the next morning, he found himself lying in a garden where the flowers never faded, where the trees were always green, and where the summer never ended, for it was a garden in fairyland.

By and by the queen of the fairies came to him



and said, "Welcome, dear King, to fairyland." Then she put an enchanted ring on his finger, and he became young again. On his head she placed a wreath of gold leaves, and from that very moment he forgot all about his life on earth.

For two hundred years Olger lived in fairyland.

In the meantime the people of France were not happy, for their kings were not good to them. At last they cried out for some one to come and help them in a struggle against their ruler.

The queen of the fairies heard them, and was sorry for them. So she went to Olger and lifted the crown of gold leaves from his head, and he remembered his people.

"I must go back," he cried. "My people need me. I must go back to my king. Where is my sword? Where is my horse?"

The queen of the fairies gave Olger his sword.

“Take also this torch,” she said, “but do not light it. If it should begin to burn, guard the flame, for with the last spark your life ends.”

She brought his servant and his great black horse to him. Then she waved her wand, and he fell fast asleep. In his sleep the queen carried Olger with his horse and his servant back to France.

When Olger awoke he was far from fairyland. There was his great black horse and there was his servant, and his sword. “Ha!” said he. “I have been dreaming of fairyland.”

They leaped on their horses, and rode along till they met a horseman.

“What city is this, good sir?” asked Olger.

“Montpellier,” answered the man.

“Oh, yes! I had forgotten,” said Olger.

“Yet I ought to remember it, for it is ruled by my cousin. His name is Havelock.”

“Oh, no!” said the man. “That is not

the name of the ruler. But I remember that there was a ruler of that name two hundred years ago."

Then he fell back a few paces and said to the servant, "Who is your master?"

"He is Olger the Dane," said the servant.

"Nonsense!" cried the stranger. "Every one knows that Olger the Dane was drowned two hundred years ago." And he rode away.

Olger and his servant rode on till they came to an inn well known to them in former days.

"Have you room for us?" asked Olger.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the innkeeper.

"Then fetch the landlord to speak with me."

"Sir," said the man, "I am the landlord."

"No, no!" said Olger. "I wish to see Hubert, the landlord of this inn."

"You are mad!" cried the man. "Hubert has been dead two hundred years."

The people heard the landlord say that the



man on the black horse was mad, and they soon gathered around and began to throw sticks and stones at the stranger. So Olger and his servant turned their horses' heads and rode away from the inn.

"We will go to Simon the Abbot," said Olger.
"He will know me."

But the abbot shook his head. "My name is

not Simon," he said, "but there was an abbot of that name two hundred years ago." Then he added, "And the abbot Simon has been dead two hundred years."

"What?" cried Olger. "Dead? Simon dead? — And my king, Charles?"

"Dead. All dead," said the abbot.

Then Olger knew that his dream of fairyland had been true after all. He told the abbot the strange story of the shipwreck, and begged him to take care of the torch which had begun to burn.

This the abbot agreed to do. So he built a house of stone under the ground where there was



so little air that the light of the torch became no more than a spark.

Then Olger rode off to fight for the people of France in their struggle against their king.

When Olger came to the battle field, he found that the French soldiers were losing. He rode among them and encouraged them. They saw the great coal-black horse; then they remembered stories that their fathers had told them, and the whisper ran from rank to rank, "It is Olger the Dane."

Again and again did Olger lead the soldiers to victory till at last the land was free.

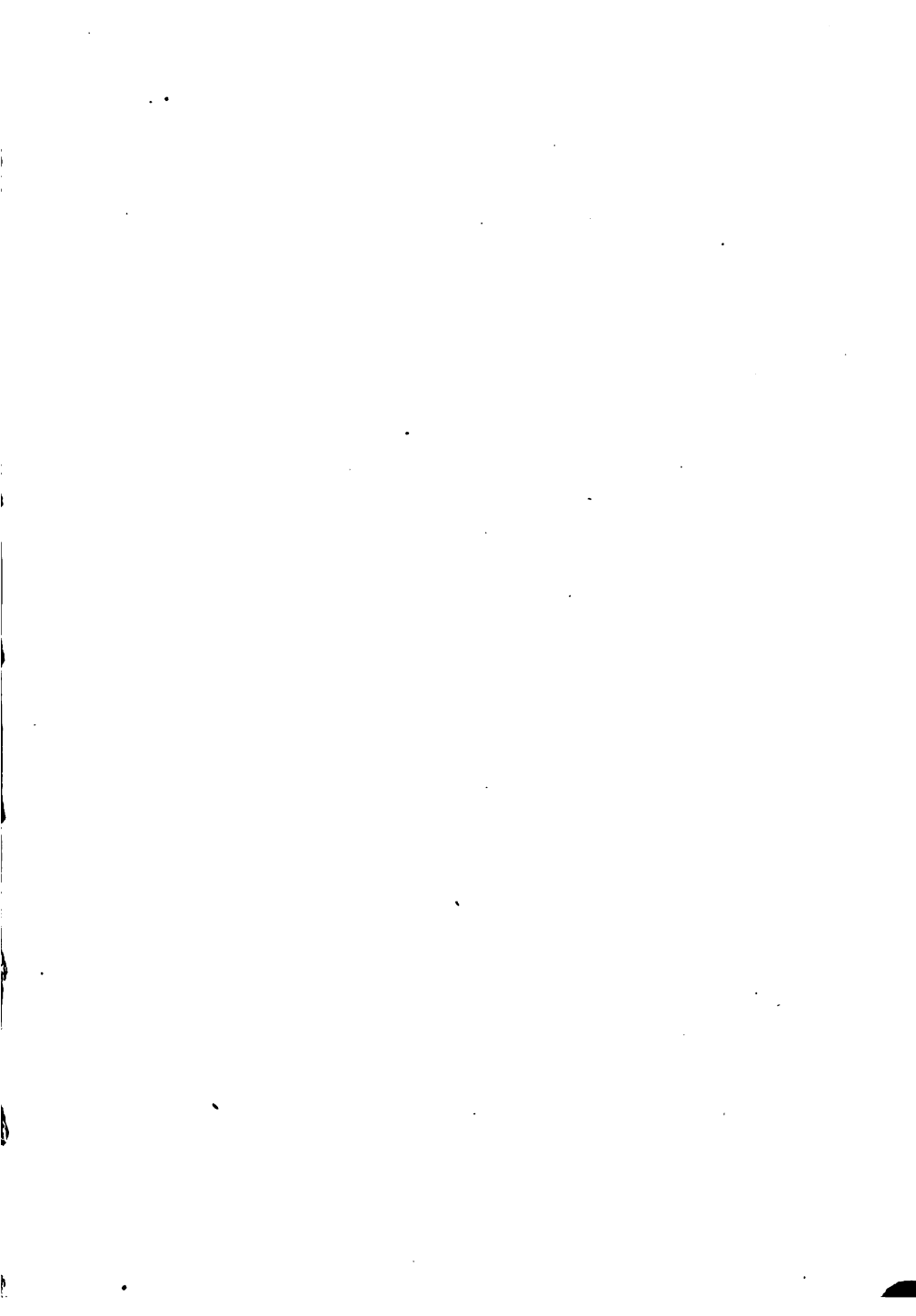
When the people saw how much he had done for them in defending them against their king, they wanted to make Olger King of France. And as Olger considered it a high honor to sit on his master's throne, he agreed.

So they hung banners and flags and pennants about the throne, and lighted many lights. The



trumpets sounded, and all the people cried, "Long live the king!" Just as Olger was about to seat himself on the throne, a thick, white cloud floated down and wrapped itself about him. When it lifted he was gone, and no one ever saw Olger the Dane again.

But men say that he lives, for the torch still burns in the stone house under the ground. He is only asleep in fairyland, and if France should need him, he will come once more to lead the soldiers with the old battle cry of "Olger! Olger the Dane!"



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